KAILYARD, SCOTTISH LITERARY CRITICISM, AND THE FICTION OF J. M. BARRIE

Andrew Nash

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
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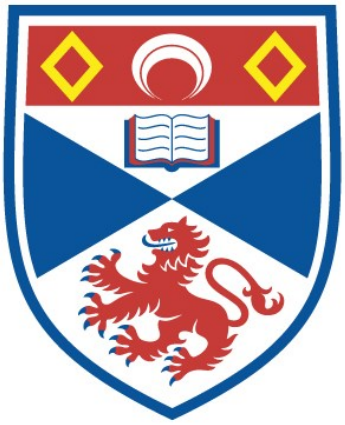

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Abstract

This thesis argues that the term Kailyard is not a body of literature or cultural discourse, but a critical concept which has helped to construct controlling parameters for the discussion of literature and culture in Scotland. By offering an in-depth reading of the fiction of J.M. Barrie - the writer who is most usually and misleadingly associated with the term - and by tracing the writing career of Ian Maclaren, I argue for the need to reject the term and the critical assumptions it breeds.

The introduction maps the various ways Kailyard has been employed in literary and cultural debates and shows how it promotes a critical approach to Scottish culture which focuses on the way individual writers, texts and images represent Scotland. Chapter 1 considers why this critical concern arose by showing how images of national identity and national literary distinctiveness were validated as the meaning of Scotland throughout the nineteenth century.

Chapters 2-5 seek to overturn various assumptions bred by the term Kailyard. Chapter 2 discusses the early fiction of J.M. Barrie in the context of late nineteenth-century regionalism, showing how his work does not aim to depict social reality but is deliberately artificial in design. Chapter 3 discusses late Victorian debates over realism in fiction and shows how Barrie and Maclaren appealed to the reading public because of their treatment of established Victorian ideas of sympathy and the sentimental. Chapter 4 discusses Barrie's four longer novels - the works most constrained by the Kailyard term - and chapter 5 reconsiders the relationship between Maclaren's work and debates over popular culture.

Chapter 6 analyses the use of the term Kailyard in twentieth-century Scottish cultural criticism. Discussing the criticism of Hugh MacDiarmid, the writing of literary histories and studies of Scottish film, history and politics, I argue for the need to reject the Kailyard term as a critical concept in the discussion of Scottish culture.

I, Andrew Paton Nash, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 100.000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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Contents

Abbreviations

BBBB	Ian Maclaren, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (London, 1894)
C	Ian Campbell, *Kailyard* (Edinburgh, 1981)
CC	Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh, 1996)
CSS	Hugh MacDiarmid, *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, ed. Alan Riach (Manchester, 1995)
DALS	Ian Maclaren, *The Days of Auld Langsyne* (London, 1895)
G	Kenneth Graham, *English Criticism of the Novel: 1865-1900* (Oxford, 1965)
HS	Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875-1914* (London, 1989)
HSL 3	Douglas Gifford (ed), *The History of Scottish Literature. Volume 3: Nineteenth Century* (Aberdeen, 1988)
K	Thomas D. Knowles, *Ideology Art and Commerce: Aspects of Literary Sociology in the late Victorian Scottish Kailyard* (Goteburg, 1983)

Introduction

DEFINING KAILYARD

> It may be that some apology is due by anyone who refers to the Kailyard. Most readers must be weary of the outworn word itself, as they are of the class of writing for which it stands. But the word has become part of the language, and will probably survive the books which it connotes.
>
> (1897)[1]

> Kailyard. The dread word floated in the BBC air like a bad smell ... An audible hiss of in-drawn breath ran round Broadcasting House. The K-word had been uttered; and by the Scottish Secretary at that.
>
> (1998)[2]

For over a century, discussions of Scottish literature and culture have been dogged by the term 'Kailyard.' The persistence of the word is as striking as the breadth of its application. Though originating in literary discourse, it has come to be used in discussions of Scottish film, history, politics and a whole range of other disciplines. All approaches to the subject are therefore confronted with a problem of definition. Whilst it is generally accepted that the term is elusive in meaning, it is nevertheless often used without much qualification and without hint that its meaning is in any way contentious. This study will argue that the term should not be seen as referring to a body of literature or cultural discourse but as a critical concept which has helped to construct controlling parameters for the discussion of literature and culture in Scotland. Focusing particularly on literature, I will assess the appropriateness of Kailyard as a critical tool by tracing the various uses of the term, analysing the reasons behind its remarkably diverse application and providing a reassessment of the individual texts with which it is most usually and misleadingly associated.

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[1] Rix, 'The Slump in Kailrunts', *Glasgow Evening Times* (January 6, 1897)
[2] Magnus Linklater, 'Towards a separate future for Scotland's broadcasters', *Scotland on Sunday* (March 1, 1998)

The two modern book-length studies of Kailyard were both written in the early 1980s, and although both focus entirely on literary subjects they are quite different in approach and scope - a fact which shows immediately the ambivalence of the term. Thomas Knowles in *Ideology, Art and Commerce* (1983) is considerably less aware of the problem of definition than Ian Campbell in *Kailyard* (1981). Knowles begins by quoting in a footnote the entry on Kailyard in the *Oxford Companion to English Literature*:

> Kailyard School, from 'kail-yard', a cabbage patch such as is commonly attached to a cottage, a term applied to writers of a recent class of fiction, describing with much use of the vernacular, common life in Scotland.[3]

Adopting this definition allows Knowles to ground his study in a specific historical moment, and he refers to three writers who make up that 'recent class': J.M. Barrie, S.R. Crockett and Ian Maclaren. He then proceeds to map out a definition of the '"classic" form' of Kailyard:

> In its "classic" form, the Kailyard is characterised by the sentimental and nostalgic treatment of parochial Scottish scenes, often centred on the church community, often on individual careers which move from childhood innocence to urban awakening (and contamination), and back again to the comfort and security of the native hearth. Typically thematic is the "lad o' pairts", the poor Scottish boy making good within the "democratic" Scottish system of education, and dying young as a graduated minister in his mother's arms with the assembled parish looking on.[4]

With this definition there is an immediate problem because the formula described is 'typically thematic' of only one story by Ian Maclaren - 'Domsie' in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* - and even then Geordie Howe doesn't actually live to be a minister. Yet this construction of the 'lad o' pairts' motif as a definition of Kailyard has passed freely into common belief - Campbell also identifies 'getting on' through

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[3] K, 220
[4] Ibid. 13

the education system as a defining characteristic of the genre.[5] In fact Knowles's '"classic" form' relies heavily on characteristics of Maclaren's stories alone, a tendency towards which other critics have swayed in their definitions of the term. Here, for example, is Trevor Royle:

> Basically, 'Kailyard' describes a school of rural sentimentality with the essential ingredient of characters who represent solid virtues: the minister or the village worthies who voice pastoral morality, the industrious son who rises by dint of hard work and his own endeavour, the honest tenant farmers who give of their best for their families' improvement. Behind them are the stock rapacious landlords, self-satisfied incomers and the ever-present and awesome figures of death and disease.[6]

Few of these ingredients are central to Barrie's fiction in its entirety and most definitions of Kailyard fail to do justice to the heterogeneity of the three authors. Nevertheless, Knowles's '"classic" form' has become entrenched in the critical mindset; it is quoted, for instance, at the beginning of Gillian Shepherd's essay in *The History of Scottish Literature*. Shepherd is at least alert to the variety of writing produced by the three authors:

> not all of the work of these three Kailyarders was written to the Kailyard 'formula', which required an omniscient narrator, an episodic format, a rural setting, an imprecise chronology, a Free Church minister and/or a lonely schoolmaster.[7]

This is the definition used by David McCrone in his sociological study of Scotland,[8] but it can't actually place Barrie in the Kailyard at all, because his narrators are *never* omniscient. More importantly, the inverted commas around the word 'formula' betray an uneasiness, but Shepherd does not ask who has given this 'formula' authority. Instead, she dismisses Knowles' own admission that his

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[5] C, 95-7. See also Edwin Morgan, 'The Beatnik in the Kailyaird', in *Essays* (Cheadle, 1974), 166-76, p. 169

[6] Trevor Royle, *The Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh and London, 1993), 166

[7] Gillian Shepherd, 'The Kailyard', in *HSL 3*, 309-20, p. 310

[8] David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The sociology of a stateless nation* (London and New York, 1992), p. 178

definition cannot accommodate the heterogeneity of Kailyard fiction by arguing that 'Barrie's and Crockett's "Street Arab" stories...are not, by strict definition, Kailyard novels.'[9] Here we reach the crux of the problem: '"classic" form', 'typically thematic', 'formula', 'strict definition'; where are these criteria coming from? If they cannot accommodate the range of fiction produced by these three writers or, indeed, any authors writing Scottish Literature in the 1890s, then Kailyard cannot be said to be performing the function of categorising what was representative of this particular era. Instead, what seems to be happening is that a formula is being imposed on literature. The critical methodology in this instance is not to look at Scottish writing in the period and draw conclusions on characteristics, but to read already defined characteristics back onto literature. What Shepherd's and other definitions actually provide is a list of what have been retrospectively considered as wrong ways of writing about Scotland. What this means is that the identity of Kailyard lies not in a body of literature itself, but in the assumptions of *literary criticism*. This would explain why when attempting to define Kailyard it has proved difficult for critics to point to a specific set of primary texts, because the meaning of Kailyard lies not in the texts but in the pointing.

The confusion over definition has been created by the failure to recognise the term as a critical concept rather than a literary movement. It is this failure which dissipates the clarity of Ian Campbell's study. Although aware of the problem of definition, Campbell attempts to define Kailyard generically by calling it a rural form of 'realistic short-story telling,' which locates its setting in a world belonging to the past and impervious to cities, railways and industrial change, covering a narrow range of class distinctions - the comfortably off poor - and promoting solid Christian moral values.[10] From this position, Campbell sets out to discuss the faults of Kailyard literature which he sees as:

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[9] Shepherd, 'The Kailyard', 311
[10] C, 12-15, 86-8

> a gelling of attitude and myth, a freezing of the possibilities of change or redefinition, a tacit acceptance of a narrow range of character and activity within which to present "real" Scotland; above all, a total weakness in any attempt to challenge the reader into startling or threatening identification or redefinition.[11]

Such an approach enables Campbell to analyse a variety of texts across time and label those which meet the above characteristics as 'Kailyard.' Thus to Campbell the term does not indicate a genre of writers but a set of characteristics that have constituted a way of writing about Scotland discernible across two centuries. This is to use Kailyard adjectivally, yet elsewhere in his book Campbell repeatedly uses the term as a noun to refer to a literary movement which occurred in the period 1880-1900. In the latter terms Kailyard is seen as an *event* in Scottish literary history, not as a *term* within which to analyse the characteristics of individual texts across time. This confusion between the use of Kailyard as an adjective and a noun forms the point of departure for this thesis. Campbell sees Kailyard as part of an attitude that creative writers have taken towards Scotland. My argument is that it is better to see Kailyard as an attitude that literary critics have taken towards Scottish literature, because the real significance of the term lies not in the body of literature it is supposed to connote, but in the way it has been used in discussions of Scottish literature.

Kailyard is an anachronistic categorising term applied by a literary critic and subsequently used as a defining device in the shaping of literary history. In its original application it referred to a specific body of literature. The first critic to use the term was J.H. Millar in an article called 'The Literature of the Kailyard' published in 1895. Millar identified a class of literature not unique to Scotland:

> Scarce a locality in these isles from Land's End to the Moray Firth has lacked a recorder of its darling idiosyncrasies. Cornwall has striven with Galloway to catch the public ear, and Troy Town with

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[11] ibid., 11

> Thrums. In this cry of mingled dialects the Caledonian note has rung out with its customary clearness.[12]

Millar went on to argue that 'J.M. Barrie may, without any grave impropriety, be termed the founder of a special and notable department in the "parochial" school of fiction' and that he is fairly entitled to look upon himself as *pars magna*, if not *pars maxima*, of the Great Kailyard Movement.'[13] The mock-heroic tone here seems tongue-in-cheek, but Millar's half-joking label set out a future critical agenda as the term soon became an institution of letters, passing into general usage remarkably quickly. A publication as apparently specialist as the *Magazine of Music*, for example, could refer to Ian Maclaren only two months later as 'the Kail-yard man.'[14]

Millar's use of the word 'movement' immediately imposes a false scenario on the issue by implying that the Kailyard writers worked together to some kind of collusive agenda. It would be more pertinent to say that by establishing a canon of authors it was Millar who invented the Kailyard agenda. He was keen to stress how widespread the practice of recording the 'darling idiosyncrasies' of 'native life' in Scotland was, and some contemporary reviews of *Auld Licht Idylls* also indicated that Barrie's book was not, in terms of content, anything new. But it is through Millar that we have inherited our canon: he makes it clear that he could have identified any number of authors who are Barrie's 'followers' but decides to 'draw attention to two only: Mr. Crockett and Ian Maclaren.'[15] By citing just these two and labelling them Barrie's followers, he set the tone for future understanding of the term, because although Kailyard has become synonymous with Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren, subsequent commentators admit that they are only touching the tip of an iceberg: Hugh MacDiarmid wrote of Kailyard as Ian

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[12] J.H. Millar, 'The Literature of the Kailyard', *New Review*, XII (January - June, 1895), 384-394, p.384
[13] Ibid. 385, 384
[14] 'Authors and their Works: J.M. Barrie', *Magazine of Music*, XII (June, 1895), 117
[15] Millar, 'The Literature of the Kailyard', 385

Maclaren, S.R. Crockett, J. M. Barrie and others,'[16] Thomas Knowles and Angus MacDonald discuss these three as the 'major representatives' of the '"Kailyard School"'[17] and Douglas Gifford lists 'J.M. Barrie, 'S.R. Crockett, Ian Maclaren and the like.'[18] Interestingly, the one book which has attempted to address the larger boundaries of the term - Ian Campbell's - was dismissed in one review as 'a misnomer'[19] and partially criticised in another for failing to deliver one of the 'things we expect of a book called *Kailyard* ... a detailed examination of some of the main works of Maclaren, Barrie, and Crockett.'[20]

It is accepted, then, that the term Kailyard provides *the* context within which to discuss the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren. Millar's tongue-in-cheek construction of a canon has had a categorical and lasting influence on the way these writers have been read within the discipline of Scottish literature. One aspect of this thesis will involve a critique and revision of such readings of literary Kailyard, showing in particular how the term is an inappropriate context within which to discuss the entire fictional output of J.M. Barrie.[21] But the thesis has another function. Analysing the employment of the term Kailyard in critical discourse enables an investigation to be made into the way Scottish literature, as a discrete entity, has been defined. This is because the term has transcended the meaning applied to it in its original context and come to be used in wider senses. Millar's use of the term can be called the specific meaning, and it is this meaning which is addressed in Thomas Knowles' study. But there is also a general meaning. The noun was quickly turned into an adjective to describe the general condition of

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[16] Hugh MacDiarmid, *Aesthetics in Scotland*, ed. Alan Bold (Edinburgh, 1984), 61
[17] K, 13; Angus Macdonald, 'Modern Scots Novelists', in *Edinburgh Essays on Scottish Literature*, ed. H.J.C. Grierson (Edinburgh, 1933), 149-73, p.154
[18] Douglas Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction: The Importance of *The Master of Ballantrae*', in *Stevenson and Victorian Scotland*, ed. Jenni Calder (Edinburgh, 1981), 62-87, p.63
[19] unsigned review, *The Scottish Review*, 26 (May 1982), 47
[20] Isobel Murray, *Scottish Literary Journal Supplement No. 17*, (Winter 1982), 94
[21] S.R. Crockett is not discussed at any length on account of Islay Donaldson's comprehensive study, *The Life and Work of Samuel Rutherford Crockett* (Aberdeen, 1989)

Scottish literature (and specifically the perceived failure of Scottish literature) in the Victorian period. The orthodox opinion about this period became, to quote David Craig, that 'there is next to nothing worth attention,'[22] and to refer to the Victorian period in Scotland as 'Kailyard' has become commonplace. As F.R. Hart has noted, for most critics Scottish Victorianism is 'nought ... but *several generations* of Kailyard sentimentalists.'[23] Craig himself discusses the period under the banner of 'Kailyaird fiction,'[24] whilst K.G. Simpson takes us back a generation further by arguing that 'Scotland missed out on Romanticism in its full flowering and wallowed in the kailyard instead.'[25] This use of the term has become so entrenched in the critical sub-conscious that commentators have absorbed the word, often rather neutrally, into their vocabulary, secure that its meaning is transparently clear to the reader. It has become a durable tool that can be used to make swift, categorising remarks on any particular writer or text in any particular period. For example:

> John Buchan (1875-1940; *Poems Scots and English*, 1917) translated Theocritus, still too kailyairdily[26]

> [Neil Munro's *Para Handy*] stories strengthened a comic tradition that is still going strong (for example, in the kailyardish *Sunday Post* with its comic strip immortals 'The Broons' and 'Oor Wullie').[27]

> The opposition to Scottish Presbyterianism, the championing of individual rights, and the strident anti-intellectualism degenerate at times into an alliance of the Kailyard and 'Wha's like us!'[28]

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[22] David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People: 1680-1830* (London, 1961), 273
[23] Francis Russell Hart, *The Scottish Novel; A Critical Survey* (London, 1978), 84
[24] Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*, 145-6
[25] K.G. Simpson, 'Immortal Make-Believe: Burns and Scottish Values', *Scottish Review*, 21 (February 1981), 4-10, p. 6. The thesis is repeated and extended in *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen, 1988)
[26] Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*, 1958 (Edinburgh, 1978), 277
[27] Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* (New York and London, 1983), 172
[28] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, op. cit. 197

> At first sight, father and beautiful daughter in the cottage at Sargard might seem comic or kailyard: but a more thoughtful reading reveals an attempt on Lockhart's part to probe a very complex relationship...[29]

In these references the term has only a nominal meaning although it implies a great number of things: insularity, a tendency towards sentimentality and a preoccupation with self-image. Perhaps the most important implication, however, is what Andrew Noble has succinctly termed 'urbane silence.' The term Kailyard signifies the apparent exclusion in fiction and poetry of any attention paid to Scotland's industrial cities.[30] This particular meaning of the term was set in stone by George Blake's seminal text *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (1951). Although the title of this book suggests a close focus on the 1890s, Blake uses the term Kailyard to stand for the whole of nineteenth-century Scotland's failure to produce a novel based on the industrial cities. Whenever the term is used, therefore, in whatever context, it invariably connotes an apparently deliberate retreat from industrial reality into a rural past or backwater.

The use of the term Kailyard to denote the Victorian period in Scottish literature stems from the dichotomy imposed by writers and critics of the twentieth-century Renaissance movement, who used the term to categorise everything they opposed and demanded be overthrown: Neil Gunn wrote that 'if the Kailyairders were sentimental and deliquescent, and the new men are vital and life-giving, the change amounts to renascence or rebirth.'[31] Similarly, for Hugh MacDiarmid 'an appropriate detestation of the "Kailyaird School" was 'part and parcel of any Scottish renaissance movement.'[32] The point here is that the term

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[29] Ian Campbell, introduction to J.G. Lockhart, *Adam Blair*, 1822 (Edinburgh, 1996), xix
[30] Andrew Noble, 'Urbane Silence: Scottish Writing and the Nineteenth-Century City', in *Perspectives of the Scottish City* ed. George Gordon (Aberdeen, 1985), 64-90
[31] 'The Scottish Renascence', 1933, in *Landscape and Light: Essays by Neil M. Gunn*, ed. Alastair McCleary (Aberdeen, 1987), 92-5, p.93. See also, 'The Scottish Literary Renaissance Movement, 1929, in ibid. 88-91.
[32] *CSS*, 143

Kailyard has been used to establish a context in which both the criticism and the creation of a national literature can take place. Significantly, developments in film studies have followed exactly the same path. In his collection of essays, *Scotch Reels*, Colin McArthur uses 'Tartanry and Kailyard' as the defining contexts in which to initiate debates on Scottish film culture, which, he declares, hitherto lacked 'self-definition.'[33] Kailyard here provides a way into a definition of the whole of modern Scottish culture, and it is this act of definition which I am stressing as important in understanding the term. Kailyard must not be seen as a literary movement, but as a defining device used in the shaping of cultural history.

The use of the term as a defining device is easily evident in the way many commentators have followed MacDiarmid and defined by difference. To most teachers of Scottish literature there is an easy way of defining Kailyard - by pointing to *The House with the Green Shutters*.[34] The understanding of George Douglas Brown's novel as anti-Kailyard has become a controlling axis on the critical graph, affording the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren a negative canonical privilege. Their work is always present in literary history but only to be dismissed as something wrong. Studies of twentieth-century Scottish literature invariably begin by using Kailyard as a defining context, seeing it as a tradition against which modern writers are reacting.[35] The fact that the term has maintained its close connection with three writers of the 1890s enables a literary map to be drawn not only with chronological precision but with a certain disguising of inbuilt criteria and qualifications. Understanding Kailyard as a critical concept rather than a literary movement lays bare some of these qualifications and tells us about the way we define Scottish literature - what criteria we bring to bear on specific texts,

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[33] Colin McArthur, introduction to *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television* (London, 1982), 1-6.
[34] This is exactly the context from which Ian Campbell begins his book *Kailyard*
[35] e.g. Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, *Ten Modern Scottish Novels* (Aberdeen, 1984), 1-9; Joachim Schwend and Horst W. Drescher (eds) *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Twentieth Century* (Frankfurt am Main, 1990), 7-12.

what makes for a good or bad example of Scottish literature and what makes a text incompatible with Scottish literature. The final chapter of this thesis will address some of these larger issues.

That Kailyard should be understood as a critical concept and not a body of literature is supported by the fact that the term has proved useful for critics discussing different periods than the 1890s and different, and at times diametrically opposed, kinds of writing from the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren. In her various bibliographies and recent critical book on the Glasgow novel, Moira Burgess uses the term 'urban kailyard' to refer to those novels of Glasgow which present 'a certain narrowness of vision', an outlook 'limited by genteel lace curtains.'[36] Similarly, in *The History of Women's Writing*, Deirdre Chapman uses 'Designer Kailyard' as the title of her chapter on contemporary popular fiction.[37] The noun which became an adjective has acquired its own list of variable adjectives: Christopher Harvie, for instance, has charged Irvine Welsh with writing 'books for people who don't read books' and thus 'exploiting a chemical generation kailyard.'[38] Similarly, Andrew Collier has attacked the Scottish media group for 'feed[ing] its viewers with a relentless diet of trash from the electronic kailyard.'[39] In each of these instances the term is being used not simply to label a school of writers or body of cultural discourse, but to cast a categorical opinion on those writers or discourse. Each critic is using the term to make a swift judgement on what they consider to be wrong ways of producing Scottish culture: evasive of industrial reality in Burgess's case; formulaic in Chapman's; appealing to a pre-defined audience in Harvie's; pursuing mediocrity in Collier's. In each case, the term is a critical tool in a cultural war.

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[36] Moira Burgess, *The Glasgow Novel 1870-1970: A Bibliography* (Glasgow, 1972), 7; see also *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction* (Argyll, 1998)
[37] Deirdre Chapman, 'Designer Kailyard', in *The History of Scottish Women's Writing* ed. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy Macmillan (Edinburgh, 1997), 536-48
[38] Christopher Harvie, 'Celts with Attitude', *Glasgow Herald* (February 21, 1998), 27
[39] Andrew Collier, 'Milking of Cowcaddens', *Scotsman* (July 24, 1998), 27

Of the above quotes, both Harvie's and Collier's were published in the national press, which is indicative of both how ubiquitous the term Kailyard has become and how the general public is assumed to know what it means. They also show how the term has come to be used in disciplines other than literature. In an article entitled 'The Kailyard Myths of Scottish History' published in 1978, James Young does not define the term, leaving us to assume that he understands Kailyard to be a synonym for false stereotyping.[40] Similarly, a recent article on the school curriculum in Scotland in the *Sunday Times* entitled 'Yet more tales of the kailyard?' also used the term without qualification or explanation to refer to the teaching of Scottish history.[41] The adjective has found its way into sociological, historical and political discussions of Scotland so that it can be applied in an even more blanket way than in literary studies. The most important work in this context is Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain*. Attempting to account for the failure of Scottish nationalism, Nairn dates the 'Scots "Kailyard" tradition' from 1820s onwards which, according to him, was the time when Scotland should have been orchestrating for itself a place on 'the great and varied stage of European nationalism.'[42] From being associated with a group of writers active in the 1890s, the term has here leapt to defining a tradition - and not just a literary tradition - originating some seventy years before. To Nairn, Kailyard fills the 'rootless vacuum, the great "absence"' which is all that Scotland had in place of Nationalist fervour. Although he draws the term out of literary history, Nairn identifies Kailyard as representing something more abstract. He declares it to be one of the two most prominent strands in the 'neurosis' that is Scotland's 'cultural sub-

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[40] James D. Young, 'The Kailyard Myths of Scottish History', *New Edinburgh Reivew*, 44 (November, 1978), 3-5

[41] Iain Martin, 'Yet More Tales of the Kailyard?', *Ecosse, The Sunday Times* (May 18, 1997), 3

[42] Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism*, 1977 (2nd Edition, London, 1981), 157, 144. For similar views in other studies of nationalism see Sir Reginald Coupland, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism: A Study* (London, 1954), 275-7; Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1994*, 1977 (2nd edition, London, 1994), pp. 98-101

nationalism.'[43] Here we have the key to understanding Kailyard's continued significance in debates over Scottish culture. The co-existence of specific and general meanings makes possible the anomaly of seeing the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren not only as Scotland's woeful alternative to Dickens and Gaskell - never mind the fact that these great English yardsticks were respectively eighteen and twenty three years dead by the time *Auld Licht Idylls* was published in 1888 - but also as the only thing Scotland could produce during the climate of European proletarian revolt. 'Why,' asks Gillian Shepherd, 'should a dozen books or so written by three Scotsmen in a single distant decade continue to attract critical attention...?'[44] The answer lies in the fact that whilst these writers were rigidly held to a generic term, in subsequent usage that term came to stand for so much more.

Unfortunately, the difficulties raised by this co-existence of specific and general meanings have not really been accepted, let alone considered. There remains a widespread assumption that we all know exactly what we mean by the term. Taking his cue from Nairn, the sociologist David McCrone identifies Kailyard as one of the 'two mythic structures' which have 'represented the dominant discourses on Scottish culture.'[45] In a later book, however, he states that '*strictly speaking* Kailyardism was a popular literary style from about 1880 to 1914.'[46] But has it ever been possible to speak 'strictly' about what Kailyard is? And why those dates? Tom Nairn stops abruptly in his attempt to speak strictly and declares that 'there is surely no need to go on. Everyone in Scotland knows only too well what is being referred to.'[47] But what is being referred to? Can Nairn really be said to have any idea himself when on the very next page he makes the

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43 Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 156
44 Shepherd, 'The Kailyard,' 310
45 McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, 174
46 McCrone, Morris and Kiely, *Scotland - the Brand* (Edinburgh, 1995), 61, [italics added]
47 Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 158

bizarre comment that George Blake - the most severe of all Kailyard critics - was 'himself a skilled practitioner of the school'?[48] There is a tendency when discussing Kailyard to resort to the assumption that 'everyone knows what is being referred to,' but the co-existence of different meanings allows Kailyard to imply something essential but actually be overloaded in breadth of reference. What this means is that not only might the fiction associated with Kailyard be considered crucial to the way Scotland as a nation has been constructed as an 'imagined community,'[49] but the *term* itself, which has become a cultural myth, can be considered in the same way. Looking for the reasons behind its various applications can open up all sorts of discussions not just about literature but the whole panorama of Scottish cultural and political discussion.

Because of the range of cultural reference manifest in the term, a thesis on Kailyard can legitimately be many things. Whilst assessing the wider implications of the way the term has been used in discussions of Scottish literature and culture in the twentieth century, this study will concentrate on the fiction of J.M. Barrie and Ian Maclaren. I will question and ultimately reject the critical parameters the term Kailyard offers these two writers, showing in particular how Barrie's fiction has suffered from a tendency to subordinate issues of style and aesthetics to an overriding concern with how his fiction represents Scottish reality. As the remainder of this introduction will show, it is this concern with realism and representation that lies at the heart of the Kailyard term and which, I will go on to argue, has hampered discussion of Scottish literature for too long. From the moment the term was first applied to Scottish literature, issues of realism and accurate representation of the nation were prioritised in critical evaluation.

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[48] Ibid. 159

[49] The phrase is Benedict Anderson's: *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983)

THE BIRTH OF THE KAILYARD TERM

The publication of Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* in 1888 was heralded as a landmark event in Scottish literature. Reviewing the work, the *Aberdeen Free Press* wrote:

> Nothing has appeared for a long time so vivid and expressive in the way of description of Scottish social existence. Beyond anything else his charm of the book consists in its absolutely successful reproduction of an antique world that is fast passing away.[50]

What is striking about this review is the way it applauds Barrie for achieving precisely what he has since been charged with having failed to do - provide an accurate and realistic portrayal of Scotland. This was not an isolated response. In its review the *Glasgow Herald* suggested the book might explode a few myths. Describing the work as 'truthful' and 'poetic', the review stated that 'to an Englishman whose knowledge of rural Scotland has been picked up in brief summer tours, "Auld Licht Idylls" must be both a surprise and a delight'.[51] There is no criticism of false reality at this stage. *A Window in Thrums* was equally well-received, the *Free Press* describing it as 'gold, pure gold,'[52] and the *Herald* commenting that '"A Humorist on his Calling" is a chapter that George Eliot need not have been ashamed of.'[53] Before J.H. Millar applied the epithet 'Kailyard' in 1895, Barrie's work was held in high esteem even by Scottish critics. It was the sheer abundance of books which followed on from the success of *Auld Licht Idylls* that aggravated concern amongst Scottish intellectuals.

The success of Ian Maclaren provoked an alteration in attitude amongst reviewers as questions of accurate representation and literary value were brought to the fore. In its review of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* the *Herald* can be seen groping for a generic term not yet available:

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[50] *Aberdeen Free Press* (May 10, 1888)
[51] *Glasgow Herald* (May 9, 1888)
[52] *Aberdeen Free Press* (November 11, 1889)
[53] *Glasgow Herald* (June 14, 1889)

> Mr Maclaren is a denizen of what may be called the literary parish of Barrie-cum-Crockett ... all his characters are obviously cousins of the weavers of Thrums ... It is all idyllic but there are few Scotsmen knowing something of their own people who will believe in it at all ... What one would like is that Mr Maclaren and other labourers in the same field, capable of admirable original work, should depict Scottish life *as they know it*. Some of them are not doing anything of the kind; and they are sweeping their note-books into print, and taking advantage of the renewed attention which Mr Barrie's books have directed to humble Scottish life ... What need is there that such men should climb up behind Mr Barrie's dog-cart.[54]

Critical assault thus only came about once a wealth of imitators followed Barrie's lead and provoked a critic like Millar into applying a derogatory label. That it was the extent of imitation rather than the success of Barrie which caused concern is suggested by the fact that whilst it was W.E. Henley who suggested the name Kailyard (as Millar confirms in his *Literary History of Scotland*),[55] Henley had himself described *The Little Minister* four years earlier as 'A book of Genius' and 'the novel of the year.'[56]

As soon as Millar had applied the label, the Glasgow newspapers in particular were quick to seize on the term Kailyard as a description of a fictional genre. The *Evening Times*, for instance, reported 'a contribution to Kailyardism by Mary Stuart Boyd' in December of the same year.[57] The *Herald* extended the term beyond the domain of Scottish literature when they reported the 'distinct Dartmoor Kailyard flavour' of Baring-Gould's *Dartmoor Idylls*.[58] It was, however, over Scottish fiction which the term took a grip. The Glasgow newspapers discussed works under the banner of Kailyard or Kailyard School throughout the second half of the decade, suggesting the ubiquity of the vogue. Reviewing a work by David Storrar Meldrum, the *Evening Times* concluded by saying the author had 'made a

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[54] *Glasgow Herald* (October 13, 1894) [original emphasis]
[55] J.H. Millar, *A Literary History of Scotland* (London, 1903), 511n
[56] *National Observer* (October 31, 1891)
[57] *Glasgow Evening Times* (December 7, 1895)
[58] review of *Dartmoor Idylls*, by Sabine Baring-Gould, *Glasgow Herald* (August 27, 1896)

distinct addition to the literature of Scottish character at its best, and he will be a sour critic who discovers anything in it savouring of the weaknesses which have come to be slumped under the wide and not too well-defined epithet "Kailyardism."'[59] It was the vogue initiated by Maclaren's success that really provoked the ire of the newspapers. On July 18, 1896, the *Evening Times* announced 'another addition to the kailyard literature ... by Charles Aitken, a well-known Vale of Leven man.' One week later in its review of the work, the *Evening Times* poured scorn on what was patently an attempt to jump on the bandwagon:

> It is Ian Maclaren watered to an uncousinable [*sic*] extent with the tears of many superfluous deathbeds. There are nine sketches in this book of 90 pages. In six of them there are eight deaths, all in the odour of sanctimoniousness. In none of them is there either plot or incident that could interest any person of the slightest intelligence, or character or observation of life or rural scenery. The book is simply written, and well printed, but it is difficult to see why it was written.[60]

As the number of imitations grew, the opportunity for satire arose, and on December 21, 1895, a writer signing himself T. Duncan wrote a spoof in the *Glasgow Herald* entitled 'An Interview with a Kailyard Novelist.'[61] Duncan tells of a chance meeting in London with Saunders McWhannel, a childhood friend from his home village of Drumwhinnie. It emerges that Saunders had left his native place for London some years ago but had found success hard to come by and, as Duncan relates, 'as we were all abject worshippers of success in Drumwhinnie we soon became content to forget Saunders' existence.' It is with surprise, therefore, that Duncan encounters Saunders now lavishly dressed and frequenting fashionable clubs in London. Enquiring what has produced this dramatic turn in affairs, Saunders proudly announces 'I am a Kailyard novelist.' In the long interview which

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[59] review of *Greymantle and Gold Fringe*, by David Storrar Meldrum, *Glasgow Evening Times* (April 26, 1896)
[60] review of *Talisman and Other Stories*, by Charles Aitken, *Glasgow Evening Times*, (July 25, 1896)
[61] T. Duncan 'An Interview with a Kailyard Novelist', *Glasgow Herald* (December 21, 1895)

follows, Saunders tells how being a Kailyard novelist 'is the brawest and easiest way o' makin' siller you are ever likely to run across':

> "Oh! I just keep blethering awa' aboot a' the things that happened lang syne in Drumwhinnie ... A' that ye need to dae is to bring back to mind a' the auld clashes that were gaen aboot when you were a laddie at schule, and dress them up to hit the ideas o' the Cockney public."

In this remarkably full and illuminating piece, all of the characteristics of the Kailyard phenomenon are brilliantly brought into satiric focus. Duncan suggests that the 'Cockney public' can hardly be expected to understand a word of the dialect, and Saunders replies:

> "Neither they dae, but they like it a' better for that. The mair unintelligible it is the better they're pleased. I dinna ken the meanin' o' a wheen of the words I use mysell but I aye write wi' the Scotch Dictionary at my elbow."

That last remark, no doubt thought highly amusing, was, of course, prophetic, anticipating the artistic strategy Hugh MacDiarmid was to adopt in the twentieth century. The unintelligibility of the dialect is just one thing which explains the appeal according to Saunders McWhannel. He describes how easy it is to pretend that the population of Drumwhinnie are all humorous folk, something which strikes the narrator as dishonest. Saunders sticks to his guns:

> "It's of nae consequence whether it exists or no. We maun purvey for the English public what the English public wants. They are awfu' pleased wi' it and the siller keeps rolling in..."

The other principal agent which keeps the 'siller' rolling in for Saunders is the 'tear-drap': '"we are awfu' for greeting in the Kailyard"', he tells Duncan, and when he mentions his forthcoming novel 'The Consumptive Probationer' he relates how he intends to '"greet them a' blin"':

> "... It'll bring tears to a North British Railway ticket-collector. The death-beds are a' just beautifu'. Ah! but its a gran' trade a Kailyard novelist, once you hae got a firm hand o' the machinary o' the teardrap."

Duncan's attitude in this article contains all of the subsequent modes of attack on Kailyard fiction: the ease with which novels could be produced; the sending-up of Scottish people for swift financial gain; the cosmetic use of dialect; the commercialisation of literature; the betrayal of Scottish reality; the appeal to an essentially female public; the misplaced emphasis on scenes of excessive pathos. 'I dinna see how it's complimentary', Duncan concludes, in a phrase which anticipates George Douglas Brown's famous remark that he thought his novel *The House with the Green Shutters* 'more complimentary to Scotland' than Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren.[62]

'An Interview with a Kailyard Novelist' shows how it was the extent of imitation which altered the attitude from positive to negative. At first Barrie was separated off from Crockett, Maclaren and the others, but once the term Kailyard had gained a stranglehold in discussions of Scottish fiction, he was, in the words of one contemporary commentator, 'brought somewhat unfairly into the same gallery.'[63] A genre had been identified and Barrie's role as precursor was too great to avoid his being swept into its confines. Contextualised in a negative paradigm, Barrie's work was subsequently assessed according to the criteria built into the Kailyard term. Concern over the representation of the nation and the demand for realist pictures of life in Scotland overwhelmed his subsequent reputation within the context of Scottish literature. The critical Kailyard had been invented.

J.H. Millar's pioneering attack on Kailyard established the basis for all future debate on the topic. His article 'The Literature of the Kailyard' articulates the belief that literature had the power to market and validate - particularly in the eyes of English readers - an authoritative identity for Scotland:

> and to the curious superstitions which the Southron breast has long nourished with regard to Scotland must now be added a new group

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62 James Veitch, *George Douglas Brown* (London, 1952), 153
63 Rix, 'The Slump in Kailrunts', *Glasgow Evening Times*, (January 6, 1897)

> of equally well-grounded beliefs; as, for example, that the Auld Lichts formed a large majority of the people of Scotland, and that the absorbing interest, if not the main occupation, of nine true-born Scotsmen out of ten is chatter about church officers, parleyings about precentors, babble about beadles, and maunderings about manses.[64]

In an article first published four years later, the novelist J.H. Findlater built on these sentiments and made absolutely clear what I will show in the following chapter: that it was literature in nineteenth-century Scotland which had come to be the site for the construction and commercial marketing of a national identity. To Findlater, novelists had fallen into a rut of national character-drawing, which could be produced to order: 'to many Englishman there is but one Scotsman - the fictitious Scot - the Scot of fiction.'[65] After quoting Crockett and Maclaren, she protests vociferously:

> Now this is a perfectly false and ridiculous misrepresentation. You may travel from one end of Scotland to another and never hear predestination or election mentioned, yet conventions die so hard, that nothing will convince your average Englishman of this, and he will support his belief by pointing to certain novels[66]

Findlater's words capture exactly the relation which existed between literature and national identity. It was due to literature's extraordinary success in validating national identity that R.B. Cunninghame Graham could write in 1896 that 'today a Scotchman stands confessed a sentimental fool.' Graham did not want to 'have Englishmen believe that the entire Scotch nation is composed of ministers, elders, and maudlin whiskified physicians,'[67] but the success of Kailyard fiction created this assumption. Over twenty years later, G. Gregory Smith began his book on the character and influence of Scottish literature by stating that 'Englishmen think they know their Scot ... In his literature ... he stands so self-confessed that any man of

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[64] Millar, 'The Literature of the Kailyard', 384
[65] J.H. Findlater, 'The Scot of Fiction', 1899, reprinted in *Stones from a Glass House* (London, 1904), 89-110, p. 92
[66] Ibid. 98-9
[67] R.B. Cunninghame Graham, 'A Survival', *Saturday Review*, 81 (May 1896), 542

intelligence can ... discern the true Scottish note.'[68] The crucial critical equation which was thus established in the assessment of Kailyard writers, and which has never been lost sight of, was whether their picture of Scotland was authentic. It is because, in Tom Nairn's words, Kailyard provided a 'definition of Scotland'[69] that it has been seen as so dangerous; that Angus MacDonald can refer to its 'insidious poison'[70] and Gillian Shepherd can accuse the writers of 'attempt[ing] national infanticide.'[71] These accusations, cased in extraordinarily strong vocabulary, do not indicate the sheer corrupting rhetorical power of the individual writers concerned, but the status which Scottish literature had acquired as an indicator and commercial marketer of national identity.

The anxiety amongst contemporary critics was that the diversity of Scottish life was not being given cultural voice. Millar, continuing his attack in his *Literary History of Scotland*, noted that 'the "Kailyard" writers, after all, have touched a mere fringe of the population;'[72] William Wallace, in an article published in 1896, lamented the absence of a novel 'representing Scottish life in all its breadth,'[73] and Findlater provided a succinct denunciation of Kailyard when she wrote: 'the Scottish people remain.'[74] These are criticisms which, although attacking individual authors, are more concerned with the perceived failing of literature as a whole to orchestrate a more authentic, totalising picture of Scotland. Findlater's command that 'the time is ripe for a new Scotch novelist who will write of Scotsmen as they are, and not as they are supposed to be' was repeating Millar's hope that 'some day' someone will arise:

> who can write of Scottish life and character with a minimum of the dreary old wit about ministers and whisky ... [and that] some one

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68 G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London, 1919), 1
69 Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 158
70 Macdonald, 'Modern Scots Novelists', 156
71 Shepherd, 'The Kailyard', 317
72 Millar, *A Literary History of Scotland*, 680
73 [William Wallace], 'Scottish fiction to-day', *The Scottish Review*, 23 (1894), 42-58, p. 50
74 Findlater, 'The Scot of Fiction', 109

> else may have realised the immense amount of stuff, as yet practically untouched and lying ready to the novelist's hand, in the life of the Scottish professional, commercial, and middling classes.[75]

Millar's concern with realism was a specific one. He declared that Barrie 'portrayed human character as it presents itself in a Scotch provincial town with *great fidelity*' but nevertheless considered the Kailyard to be an 'illusion.'[76] The paradox is explained by the unstated critical premise: Millar's criticism of Kailyard's selective realism is not so much a criticism of its realism per se, but its status as a *representative* picture of Scottish reality.

This concern with presenting a representative reality inevitably placed strong demands on the need for contemporary settings. Writing in 1894, William Wallace, who had provided generally welcoming reviews of Barrie and Maclaren's texts in the *Academy*, drew attention to the absence of a contemporary setting as the main characteristic of 'Scottish fiction of to-day.' The tendency of Mrs Oliphant, Stevenson, Barrie, Henry Johnston, Sophie F. F. Veitch and Annie S. Swan is, he argued, 'to look askance at, if not to shirk, Scotland of to-day, and to let their imaginations have scope in the Scotland of yesterday, and still more of the day before yesterday.'[77] In a later article in the *Bookman*, Wallace anticipated 'the rise of a school of fiction dealing exclusively and even realistically with the Scotland of to-day.'[78]

These sort of arguments about a realist Scotland have formed the focal paradigm within which Scottish writers since the 1890s have come to be discussed, leading to a bias in literary criticism towards unqualified approval for realism and

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[75] Millar, *A Literary History of Scotland*, 681
[76] Ibid. 656, 659 [italics added]
[77] Wallace, 'Scottish Fiction To-day', 43. Further on down the same page Mrs Oliphant *is* said to 'shirk' the 'Scotland of to-day'.
[78] William Wallace, 'Coming Scottish Literary Developments', *Bookman*, 17 (Feb 1900), 137-8, p.138

suspicion of romance or fantasy. The following chapter considers why this concern over accurate representation of the nation arose. Through analysis of the writings of the *Blackwood's* group and the critical reception of Burns, I will show how images of national identity and national literary distinctiveness were validated throughout the nineteenth century. As the century progressed, these images came to appear outdated and contributed to the climate of nostalgia which I discuss in the second half of the chapter. It is this climate which provides the main cultural context for Kailyard fiction and explains the responses taken to it that I have been discussing in this introduction.

The critical approach to Scottish literature contained in the Kailyard term has bred various assumptions about the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren which the succeeding four chapters seek to overturn. Chapter 2 outlines some of the trends of regional fiction in the late nineteenth century and shows how many contemporary reviewers understood the work of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren to be imparting a mimetic, documentary representation of Scotland. However, an account of Barrie's early novels shows that his work was deliberately artificial in design and not aiming to paint a factual picture of social life. I argue that by concentrating on the depiction of social reality, the Kailyard term has prevented these works from being considered on their own terms. Barrie's artistic strategy will be shown to be one of inducing emotion in the reader rather than reproducing external reality.

Chapter 3 carries this discussion further to show how this artistic strategy enabled Barrie's early work, and also that of Maclaren, to be hailed by contemporary critics as masterpieces of realism. Instead of being seen as a retreat from realist techniques, as has hitherto been claimed, I will show how these works in fact embodied an established realist aesthetic descended from ideas of sympathy and the sentimental. Once again, an analysis of selected stories by Maclaren will

show how depiction of a factual Scotland is not the principal rhetorical strategy of this work.

The overall argument of chapters 2 and 3 is that we need to look beyond representation of the nation in order to truly understand and appreciate the work of Barrie and Maclaren. Chapter 4 carries this strategy further by discussing in depth the fictional works by Barrie most constrained by the Kailyard context. Preoccupations with national identity have obscured other more pressing issues in Barrie's work such as his treatment of sentimentality, creativity and male sexuality. My account of Barrie's four longer novels places his work in new contexts and grants him a more privileged place in the development of late Victorian and Edwardian fiction than the Kailyard term has allowed.

Chapter 5 completes the redressing of erroneous assumptions bred by the Kailyard term by looking at the issue of high and low art. Because of its subsequent association with cinema, music hall and other forms of popular entertainment, Kailyard has come to be seen - and summarily dismissed - as a form of popular culture. By discussing the publishing climate in which their fiction was produced, however, I argue that this association has obscured the real relationship which Barrie and Maclaren's work held in contemporary discussions over popular culture. In particular, I show how the extravagant marketing of Maclaren's work by William Robertson Nicoll resulted in an ensuing debate involving various critics and intellectuals over what constituted serious Scottish literature. Maclaren's work became notorious because of the way it was promoted by Nicoll as high art.

Chapter 6 assesses the wider implications of the way the Kailyard term has been used in discussions of Scottish literature and culture in the twentieth century. Discussing the criticism of Hugh MacDiarmid, the writing of literary histories and studies of Scottish film, I argue that the Kailyard/anti-Kailyard binary, which has been employed throughout the century as a barometer for critical evaluation, is of

limited use as a device for assessing Scottish literature because of the way it elevates articulation of national identity as a criterion of literary profundity. Following on from my discussion of Barrie, I will argue for the need to reject Kailyard, and the critical assumptions implicit in the term, as a defining device in the understanding of Scottish writers and Scottish culture at large.

I

CREATING A KAILYARD VISION

In his *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, Hugh MacDiarmid set out an argument for a Scottish cultural renewal when he wrote that a Scottish writer

> cannot be proceeding along the lines calculated to enable him to express himself and realise his artistic potentialities most fully unless it offers an unmistakable practical equivalent - in contrast if not also in form and language - of the difference in psychology and cultural background between any Scot and any Englishman.[1]

Over a century earlier, something very similar had been written by John Gibson Lockhart, a writer who has acquired considerably less canonical authority than MacDiarmid:

> poetry, imagination, fancy, sentiment, art, philosophical belief, whatever comes from the soul - these are the things in which every nation displays a character of its own, and which it consequently requires a separate and peculiar literature to express and embody; but these are things which Scotland has not yet formed any school of its own.[2]

The text from which this quote comes, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, forms part of a literary era whose creative and critical writing was concerned with essentially the same thing as MacDiarmid: identifying a national culture distinct to Scotland. In *Peter's Letters* Lockhart prefigures MacDiarmid by arguing that a renewal of the national spirit in literature, painting and religion should be the directing thesis of Scottish cultural activity. Both writers believed that Scotland needed to articulate a national image through literature, and at times the ideas of Peter Morris - Lockhart's semi-autobiographical letter writer - could almost be mistaken for those of MacDiarmid:

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[1] *CSS*, 97
[2] John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk*, 3rd edition (Edinburgh, 1819), III, 128

> [Scotland should] learn to consider her own national *character* as a mine of intellectual wealth, which remains in a great measure unexplored. While she looks back upon the history of England, as upon that of the country to which she has suspended and rendered subordinate her fortunes, yet she should by no means regard English *literature*, as an expression of her mind, or as superseding the examination of what intellectual resources remain unemployed within her own dominions. (II,359-60)

In terms of critical attitude this is no different from MacDiarmid. It is ironic, therefore, that the images of national identity created by Lockhart and his contemporaries were the very images MacDiarmid rejected when manufacturing his own cultural renewal. This chapter will examine some critical attitudes towards Scottish literature expressed in the nineteenth century. I will show how the attempt by Lockhart and his contemporaries to find a literature which would express the Scottish 'mind' or 'character' resulted in the circulation and validation of images of national identity which would later feed into Kailyard fiction. It was the success of these images which brought about the critical attack I discussed in my introduction - the demand for realism and accurate representation of the nation. To MacDiarmid, the Kailyard images represented a false national identity, but his strategy to reject them was driven by the same methods and motives that had constructed them in the first place: the idea that a national identity in perceived threat of oblivion must be invented (or re-invented) and a sense of national cultural heritage restored.

Lockhart's concern with the restoration of a Scottish cultural heritage must be seen in the larger context of the developing significance of nationalism in the Romantic period. It is widely accepted that the late eighteenth century marks a key point in the development of cultural nationalism. Building on the theories of Rousseau and others, German Romantics developed a cultural and anthropological aspect to nationalism. As Anthony D. Smith has summarised, it grows from the idea of 'national genius' that had begun to develop in the eighteenth century:

> For Herder every nation has its peculiar 'genius', its own ways of thinking, acting and communicating, and we must work to rediscover that unique genius and that particular identity, wherever it is submerged or lost[3]

The idea that individual groups of people had or should have a discernible individual 'character' is a key idea in the Romantic period. Rousseau had taken this to be such an important first principle that he wrote 'every people has, or must have, a character; if it lacks one, we must start by endowing it with one.'[4] Lockhart, John Wilson and other writers associated with *Blackwood's* were working to this very end. Their role in developing an enduring sense of Scottish national identity is exacerbated, moreover, by another trend which contributed to the growth of nationalism - the development of print capitalism. In his study of the origins of nationalism, Benedict Anderson points to the breakdown of the diversity of language in the wake of capitalism and print technology as paving the way for the emergence of a new form of 'imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation.'[5] As writers at the centre of a thriving, national (in the sense of British as well as Scottish) print culture, it is no surprise that many of the criteria Wilson and Lockhart marketed as constituent of Scottish national identity remained in force throughout the century, and arguably are still with us today.

The *Blackwood's* era is important, moreover, not just for marketing a particular kind of national identity; it also made a crucial contribution to the idea that Scottish literature was a discrete entity, independent of other literatures. Timothy Brennan has argued that the 'rise of the modern nation-state in Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is inseparable from the forms and subjects of imaginative literature.'[6] Scotland is, of course, a complication inside

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[3] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Harmondsworth, 1991), 75
[4] cited by Smith, ibid.
[5] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 46
[6] Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form', in Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and*

these arguments, as the course of nationalism in nineteenth-century Scotland remained at the level of culture and never acquired a full political dimension. But the lack of agitation for political sovereignty should not blind us to the truth that in the early years of the nineteenth century, Scotland, like other nations, concentrated on developing a sense of national cultural distinctiveness, and began to define for itself a national identity through literature and culture. Literature played a crucial role in the formation of an identity which, through large scale ideological insemination, encouraged the construction of an imagined plane of communality - the national spirit. But if literature helped construct a sense of the nation, then correspondingly the nation helped construct a viewpoint on literature. Individual works came to be seen almost exclusively within paradigms of nationality. Just as MacDiarmid was later to do, Wilson and Lockhart discussed and assessed individual writers and texts within the context of nationality and national traditions.

IDENTIFYING NATIONAL DISTINCTIVENESS

When *Peter's Letters to his Kinsfolk* was published in 1819 it caused a scandal. The book identified Francis Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, as the 'enemy of his country' (II,130) and the paradigm of an intellectual movement in Scottish culture which, in the words of Lockhart's semi-autobiographical letter-writer Peter Morris, was 'the legitimate progeny of the sceptical philosophers of the last age' (II,128). Jeffrey, the book suggests, had narrowed Scottish intellectualism through his indiscriminate attacks on literature and particularly on Wordsworth, whom Peter Morris regularly quotes. Out of what Lockhart saw as a decayed state, the book offers a prescriptive agenda for the restoration of a Scottish cultural heritage in the nineteenth century. Following the convention set forth by Smollett and Scott, and anticipating the role of the narrator in Kailyard

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Narration (London and New York, 1990), 44-70, p. 48

fiction, Lockhart allowed an investigation into Scottish identity to be built up by an insider adopting an outsider's perspective.

F.R. Hart argues that Peter Morris, the travelling Welshman, comes to Scotland with his own 'historical and cultural enthusiasm and veneration for Scotland and Scottish character,' but finds this to be a Scotland which no longer exists: 'he can see present Scottish reality as fallen from its true self' and 'untrue to its own national culture.'[7] Lockhart's text is thus all about deciding what constitutes Scotland's 'true self,' and its 'national culture'; it attempts an invention of national identity whilst making categorical claims to legitimacy and authenticity. The criteria which Lockhart puts forward as indicative of the national spirit accord with much of what was to establish itself as Scottish national identity throughout the century: the concern to prove the maintenance of a folk tradition, an anti-urban bias, a celebration of the Scottish peasantry, and a theory of culture which emphasises the need to base art on an identifiable geographical reference.

Lockhart identifies four figures as important forces in the renewal of Scottish culture: Burns, Hogg, Scott and Chalmers. Burns, 'a glorious vindication of the born majesty of Genius!' (I,112), is revered because of his embodiment of the folk tradition. When Peter Morris attends the Burns Dinner he declares that 'I have never witnessed a more triumphant display of national enthusiasm' (I,111). Because the Dinner is also attended by Hogg - 'the only worthy successor of his genius' (I,133) - it serves not only to ensure the strength of national feeling in the arts but to guarantee its maintenance in the living literature. But of course this idea of 'national feeling' is a highly loaded one. It is a national feeling that venerates poets born into the peasantry, who are promoted as being in closer harmony with nature. It is significant that Morris attends the Burns dinner immediately after having visited Henry Mackenzie, who, as Andrew Noble has argued, stood at the

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[7] F.R. Hart, *Lockhart as Romantic Biographer* (Edinburgh, 1971), 60, 56, 61

very centre of the eighteenth-century literary establishment's veneration of the pastoral as a politically motivated anti-urban ethos.[8] Lockhart's text must be seen in the same context, promoting what Morris terms a 'certain delicious atmosphere of pastoral loneliness' (II,316). It is certainly true that the text typifies the way political interests directed the hand of Lockhart and his contemporaries, but the way that Lockhart's pastoral bias contributed to the construction of a national identity which was strongly detached from the real-life experiences of the majority of people in nineteenth century Scotland, proves how much of an authority literature held over national identity in this period.

Thomas Chalmers was also a propagator of a rural ideal - a programme of implanting rural ways of life in urban settings - which has recently been identified as indicative of the nineteenth-century Church's failure to confront social realities.[9] Lockhart offers unqualified admiration for Chalmers: in contrast to the empty rhetoric of the *Edinburgh Review* and the 'theatre', Peter Morris identifies in him an 'arch of imagination' (III,269) wedded to an oratory that nourishes discipleship whilst upholding the kind of sentiments that express themselves most fully in the Country Sacrament that Peter attends at the close of the work. It is here that Peter articulates the central drive of Lockhart's literary and nationalist ideology:

> It is in rustic assemblages like these that the true characteristics of every race of men are most palpably and conspicuously displayed, and it is there that we can best see in multiplied instances the natural germs of that which, under the influence of culture assumes a prouder character, and blossoms into the animating soul and spirit of national literature (III,326)

Such a passage is steeped in German Romanticism with its look to the rural as a source of authenticity for the spirit of the nation, which in turn is identified as the

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[8] Andrew Noble, 'Versions of Scottish Pastoral: the Literati and the Tradition 1780-1830', in Thomas A. Markus (ed.), *Order in Space and Society: Architectural Form and its Context in the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 1982), 263-310

[9] see Donald C. Smith, *Passive Obedience and Prophetic Protest: Social Criticism in the Scottish Church 1830-1945* (New York, 1987)

source of creative genius. *Peter's Letters* is everywhere looking to authenticate the national spirit it has constructed. Morris regularly discusses craniology and the physiognomy of individual figures in an attempt to legitimise through organic metaphors the presence of a national spirit: on seeing Scott's face he declares to have been 'furnished with a new key to the whole purpose of his intellectual labours' (II, 347).

Scott is also portrayed as embodying history. On recounting 'The Ballad of Otterbourne' Morris observes:

> I shall certainly never forget the fine heroic enthusiasm of look, with which he spoke these lines - nor the grand melancholy roll of voice, which shewed with what a world of thoughts and feelings every fragment of the old legend was associated within his breast. It seemed as if one single cadence of the ancestral strain had been charm enough to transport his whole spirit back into the very pride and presence of the moment (II,303)

Peter's Letters is a text which continually slips from the satiric to the serious, and everything Peter Morris says should be seen in the context of Lockhart's potentially satiric intention. The account of Scott verges on the farcical yet we must not totally dismiss the text as insincere. The preoccupation with authenticating the national spirit is highly characteristic of the Romantic age with its preoccupation with native genius and the genuine.'[10] In Lockhart this manifested itself most fully in the importance he attributed to the *genius loci*, which is given strong emphasis in both the *Life of Scott* and the *Life of Burns*. In *Peter's Letters* the preoccupation with authenticating the national spirit is extended to the consecration of the land. Abbotsford, in its country setting, stands as a testament to Scott's power to embody and entwine history and landscape. Whilst touring the border country, an exultant Morris is shown by Scott places where ballads in the *Minstrelsy* were set,

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[10] For an account of the significance of 'the genuine' to Romantic constructions of Burns, see Nicholas Roe, 'Authenticating Robert Burns', in Robert Crawford (ed.), *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority* (Edinburgh, 1997), 159-79

causing the traveller to declare that 'the name of every hill and every valley all around is poetical' (II,320) and that 'if I were to quote all the poetry connected with the scenes among which I now stood - in truth, my letter might easily become a volume' (II,323).

The significance of landscape to Scottish literature has a strong post-union tradition. A key figure is, of course, Ossian, whose wild, untamed landscapes appealed so much to the emerging Romantic sensibility. But the tradition was already established in the immediate wake of the Union. Allan Ramsay had advocated the cultural value of Scottish natural description in the preface to *The Ever Green* (1724) and James Thomson had built his *Seasons* (1726-30) around a close description of Scottish-inspired scenery. In a preface to the second edition of *Winter* (1726) Thomson had stressed the importance of 'Native Poetry,'[11] and it was this concept which was to acquire considerable cultural prominence in the Romantic period. The idea that poetry emanated from the land was typical of the way that throughout Europe, literary Genius was being seen as springing from the native soil. Wilson and Lockhart were following European trends in encouraging the idea that a separate, national tradition of literature was identifiable because present in the land. The importance of the Scottish case is that this Romantic concern with the *genius loci* coincided with a period of anxiety over Scottish identity as a whole and whether it could remain distinguishable from Englishness or Britishness. Consequently, the criteria Lockhart and Wilson seized upon as characteristic of Scotland's native literary genius quickly became the touchstone for authenticity to the extent that it fixed in mind a static, monolithic sense of national identity.

John Wilson, Lockhart's fellow *Blackwood's* editor, also saw it as his objective to revive in the people of Scotland a sense of national pride in their

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[11] see Mary Jane W. Scott, *James Thomson: Anglo-Scot* (Athens and London, 1988), 110

heritage, which he believed had been distanced by the Enlightenment's forging of a 'North British' identity. He, too, was driven by a belief in the importance of National Character as a discourse for cultural expression, and in a review of Lockhart's *Life of Burns* he admonished England for 'her own neglect of native genius.'[12] Wilson's own fiction was, up until the end of the century at least, extremely popular, going through a great many editions and, according to his daughter, establishing him in America as the most prized and appreciated 'literary man of our land.'[13] George Gilfillan was to claim later in the century that Wilson's genius was 'peculiarly distinguished' by his 'fine nationality'[14] and in his fiction and criticism, Wilson presented the distinctiveness of Scottish character in similar ways to Lockhart, by elevating the spiritual status of the poor, representing rural, peasant Scotland as essential Scotland, and identifying in Scotland's poets (particularly Burns, Thomson and Hogg) an acute national expression.

Wilson saw it as evident of the depth of Scotland's 'mental power' that it had produced a number of poets (Burns, Hogg and Campbell) from within the peasantry.[15] In his novel *Margaret Lyndsay*, he declares that in Scotland 'thoughtful intelligence has long been the character of lowly life'[16] and throughout his criticism he elevates the spiritual status of the poor, identifying them as the defining characteristic of Scotland:

> in Scotland alone, and I say so with a due sense of the virtues of England, does there exist among the peasantry a union of

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[12] [John Wilson], 'Lockhart's "Life of Burns"', *Blackwood's*, 23 (May 1828), 667-712, p. 711

[13] Mrs Gordon, *'Christopher North' A Memoir of John Wilson* (Edinburgh, 1862), 308. The judgement seems unlikely given the adulation afforded to Scott and Burns, and Mrs. Gordon is guilty of over-playing her hand on a number of occasions in this text. But it at least establishes that Wilson's name spread to America.

[14] George Gilfillan, 'Professor Wilson', 1854, reprinted in W. Robertson Nicoll (ed.), *Gilfillan's Literary Portraits* (London, 1909), 43

[15] 'Scotch Poets, Hogg and Campbell, Hynde and Theodric', *Blackwood's*, 17 (January, 1825), 109

[16] *Trials of Margaret Lyndsay*, 1823, in *Tales of Professor Wilson* (Edinburgh and London, n.d.), 198

> knowledge, morality and religion, so universal, so intense, and so solemn, as to constitute National Character.[17]

It should be noticed here how Wilson has a pre-defined sense of what constitutes 'National Character.' It is not specifically that Scottish national character is held to exist in the peasantry, but that the state of Scotland's peasantry suggests the presence of National Character. The capital letters give away Wilson's direct reference to a well-established cultural term descended from Rousseau. Under the nationalist and Romantic theories he is following, it is *inevitable* that Wilson should look to rural and peasant life for evidence of National Character, and an anti-urban ethos rebounds throughout his criticism. 'When the work to be done is a Poem on Scottish Life', he argues, 'any one of her hills or valleys is worth all her towns and cities jumbled together in one mighty metropolis.'[18] In his novel *Margaret Lyndsay*, he traces a path similar to Wordsworth in the *Prelude* by presenting an individual's retention of the spiritual well-being which had been fostered in her country upbringing when she is forced to live in the corrupting, anti-religious threat of the city (Edinburgh). In his criticism Wilson presents the city as inimical to the poetic capacity; 'the muck of the Molendinar, and the gardyloo of the Gallowgate' can offer the poet nothing compared to 'the smell of the green hills,' he argues. Claiming Moses, Theocritus, Virgil and Pope to have drawn their poetic genius from 'sheep', he lays bare his argument of the incompatibility between poetry and industrial life when he argues that 'Campbell's progenitor was a cotton-spinner, a pursuit which calls much more for jennies than genius.'[19]

Andrew Noble has highlighted the undertone of political manipulation in Wilson's work and dismissed both him and Lockhart as promulgating a 'pseudo-national identity' analogous to Scott's Abbotsford: 'superficial symbols of alleged

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17 'The Radical's Saturday Night', *Blackwood's*, 6 (December ,1819), 257
18 [John Wilson], '*The Maid of Elvar*', *Blackwood's*, 31 (June, 1832), 998
19 'Scotch Poets, Hogg and Campbell, Hynde and Theodric', op. cit. 110

integration' supposedly indicative of 'a traditional Scottish unity.'[20] In methodology, however, this is no different from what MacDiarmid was to do at the beginning of the next century. As with MacDiarmid, national expression *in itself* occupied a privileged place in Wilson's cultural lexicon. As far as Wilson is concerned, this stems from his interest in Romantic theories of National Character. The values he ascribes to Scottish poetry emerge most cogently in a review of Allan Cunningham's 'Maid of Elvar' in *Blackwood's*. Although he gives a negative response to the technical properties of the poem - the versification, some of the minor characterisation, and even a good deal of the language is upheld to be ordinary - the reception of Cunningham is overwhelmingly positive because he is seen in a line of poets originating from Thomson whose geniuses are 'national'. Cunningham is valuable because 'the spirit of the old ballad breathes still in its strong simplicity through the composition of his "New Poem"'; Home and Beattie's sentiment is Scottish by virtue of their archetypal debt to the 'old Ballads'; Grahame's line '"How still the morning of the hallowed day!"' is national because 'it is a line that could have been uttered only by a holy Scottish heart [because] we alone know what is indeed Sabbath silence'; and Thomas Campbell and Joanna Baillie are national because their poetry evokes a geographically identifiable place.[21]

It is perhaps the latter point that is most crucial in terms of characterising what happened to the identity of Scottish literature in the nineteenth century. Identifying rural Scotland as the seat of poetic genius would probably not have had such a significant impact on the course of Scottish literature if Wilson had not simultaneously identified the treatment of an actual geographical place as the key to recognising a poet's 'national' genius. In his criticism of Burns, Campbell, Cunningham, Motherwell and others, Wilson makes reference to specific places

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[20] Noble, 'Versions of Scottish Pastoral' op. cit. 272, 302
[21] Ibid. 999, 981, 982, 984

from which the poets derived their poetry, and in response to reading the proof of a negative review by Henry Mackenzie of his own *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*, he took issue with Mackenzie's criticism that 'the scenery, though professedly Scots, is not always true to the profession of its locality.'[22] The *genius loci* that Lockhart found so valuable in Burns and Scott was of central importance to Wilson too. In the same review of Cunningham quoted above, Wilson applauded James Thomson for having restored poetry to 'working life' in Scotland, and he makes a point of stressing that Thomson described a specifically Scottish landscape:

> His suns rise and set in Scottish heavens; his "deep-fermenting tempests are brewed in grim evening" Scottish skies; Scottish is his thunder of cloud and cataract; his vapours, and snows and storms, are Scottish; and, strange, as the assertion would have sounded in the ears of Samuel Johnson, Scottish are his woods...[23]

It is significant that Wilson does not suggest that Thomson's adoption of English as his literary language compromises the Scottishness of his art. The decline of the Scots language generated a need for intellectuals to relocate the area where national distinctiveness could be recognised, and as a result landscape was granted considerable authenticity throughout the century.

Influenced by German Romanticism and its associated theories of nationalism, Wilson and Lockhart both gave strong credence to the idea that the land contained the meaning of Scotland. This was an idea which was to take a firm grip on subsequent creative and critical output, and I will show later in this chapter how an interest in landscape fuelled the collecting of Scottish songs and reminiscences in the Victorian period. Before discussing these topics, however, I

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22 Quoted by Mrs. Oliphant, *Annals of a Publishing House: William Blackwood and his Sons. Their Magazine and Friends*, 2nd edition (Edinburgh & London, 1897), 271

23 '*The Maid of Elvar*' op. cit. 981. The same argument is applied in 'A Few Words on Thomson', in *The Works of Professor Wilson*, edited by Professer Ferrier, Vol X (Edinburgh and London, 1857), 253-73.

want to show how the criteria Wilson and Lockhart had set up for the critical discussion of Scottish literature worked in practice. The writing and criticism of both authors had a crucial effect on establishing a functional identity for literature. In their attempts to negotiate the issue of national identity in the post-enlightenment age, they not only promoted a set of characteristics which were deemed illustrative of Scottish national distinctiveness - characteristics that were to become the focus of much of the content of Scottish literature in the century - they also established a crucial methodological pattern that would have a huge influence on the status that was to be afforded Scottish literature throughout the century: in the nineteenth century, literature was established as the principal way in which Scotland and Scottish identity was understood, a convention which would lead on to the concerns over representation voiced by the Kailyard critics at the end of the century. The convention can be recognised most fully by examining the critical reception of Burns in the nineteenth century.

READING BURNS

The nineteenth-century Burns critics did not make any radical departures from the base of understanding laid out by critics of the Enlightenment. The two seminal events in early Burns criticism were the review of *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (1786) by Henry Mackenzie in the *Lounger*, and the first collected edition of the poems edited by James Currie in 1800. Mackenzie's review typified the Enlightenment's general reception of Burns which seized on the rural and domestic characteristics of the poetry, enabling Burns to be accommodated to primitivist theories. It is significant that in advertising the poems Burns's publishers tied the work up with advertisements for the *Lounger*, the *Mirror*, and *The Man of Feeling*. Burns became the 'Heaven-taught ploughman' and 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' was established as his best and most popular poem. From the very beginning Burns was being accommodated to philosophical or political theories, and because

of the nature of Enlightenment theories, which, as in the case of Mackenzie, sought to fix strong ties between an author and his text, biographical investigation was established as primary critical methodology. But instead of using biography to understand the poetry, the poetry was used as a tool for the principal aim which was the uncovering of Burns the man. The kind of man that the men of the Enlightenment period were eager to uncover was the man who not only wrote 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' but who experienced its sentiments; it established itself as Burns's most popular poem because it offered the suggestion that the Enlightenment ideal of 'virtuous sensibility' was evident in the *real* conditions of human life. Burns *was* the cotter. Writing in 1793, Robert Heron remarked that Burns showed

> that Pastoral Poetry needs not to employ itself upon the fictitious manners, and modes of life, but may, with higher poetical advantages paint the humble virtues, the simple pleasures, the inartificial manners of our peasantry, such as they *actually exist*.[24]

James Currie's editorial judgements in the first collected edition of 1800 crystallised the idea that it wasn't just helpful to know Burns's life to understand his poetry, the two were entirely co-existent: 'If fiction be, as some suppose, the soul of poetry, no one had ever less pretensions to the name of poet than Burns.'[25] Burns's poetry was not about art, it was about revealing reality; reality as felt by a ploughman in Scotland:

> the subjects on which he has written, are seldom, if ever, imaginary; his poems, as well as his letters, may be considered as the effusions of his sensibility, and the transcript of his own musings on the *real* incidents of his humble life.[26]

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[24] Robert Heron, *Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland*, 1793, quoted in Donald Low (ed.), *Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage* (London, 1974), 97 [italics added].
[25] James Currie, 'Criticism on the writings of Burns', *The Works of Robert Burns, with an Account of his Life*, 1800, quoted in *Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage*, 132
[26] Ibid. [italics added]

Poetry, in this case, was seen as documentary and it is from this base that critical practice was often carried into the realm of social history. It has been well documented how Burns became identified as Scotland's National Bard and how evidently he revelled in that construction. What is perhaps less widely appreciated is the extent to which Scotland became identified as 'The Cotter's Saturday Night'. Such an equation meant that nineteenth-century Scottish identity was seen as predominantly literary. The conventions of reading Burns that were established and built on throughout the century had made it the case that any Scottish literature, whether realism, romance or fantasy, was understood as revealing the constituents of Scottish identity.

Writing in *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1819, John Wilson ascribed a 'depth of moral and religious feeling in the peasantry of Scotland' that could not be found in England; 'a great poet could not be born among the English peasantry', whereas Scotland was blessed by 'a spirit of poetry' because 'Religion', 'imagination' and 'a beautiful country' enables 'those higher and purer feelings which, in less happy lands, are possessed only by the higher ranks of society, [to be] brought into free play over all the bosom of society.'[27] Wilson reveals here his nationalist motives - the projection of Scotland as distinct from England - and uses Burns's status as a peasant poet to understand Scottish distinctiveness:

> The fireside of an English cottage is often a scene of happiness and virtue; but unquestionably, in the 'Cotter's Saturday Night' of Burns, we feel, that we are reading the records of a purer, simpler, more pious race; and there is in that immortal poem a depth of domestic joy - an intensity of the feeling of home - a presiding spirit of love - and a lofty enthusiasm of religion, which are all peculiarly Scottish, and beyond the pitch of mind of any other people.[28]

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[27] John Wilson, 'Some Observations on the Poetry of the Agricultural and that of the Pastoral District of Scotland, illustrated by a Comparative View of the Genius of Burns and the Ettrick Shepherd', in *Blackwood's Magazine*, IV (February, 1819), quoted in *Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage*, 309

[28] Ibid. 310

Wilson consolidates the Enlightenment tradition by arguing that the peasantry of Scotland was 'not surveyed and speculated on by him [Burns] as the field of poetry, but as the field of his own existence'.[29] The effect of such an approach was to erase the significance of point of view in the poetry. Because his criticism leads from the assumption that Burns is 'feeling' 'The Cotter's Saturday Night', Wilson is unable to draw attention to the stance adopted by Burns vis-a-vis his immediate audience, which is established in the first stanza to be the lawyer Robert Aiken to whom the poem is dedicated. The significance of Burns's consciousness of describing the 'simple Scottish lays' to a refined, professional audience cannot be accommodated. To Wilson it's simple: Burns 'form[s] a part of the *existence* of the Scottish peasantry;'[30] read Burns and you understand peasant Scotland and because peasant Scotland is unique, you understand what is unique to Scotland:

> Burns's great calling here below was to illustrate the peasant life of Scotland. Ages may pass without another arising for that task; meanwhile the whole pageant of Scottish life has passed away without record.[31]

This is Burns the social historian, whose artistic technique consists of his very lack of it:

> he might have done far more good than he has done - had he delighted less in painting the corruptions of religion, than in delineating her native and indestructible beauty. 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' shews what he could have done - had he *surveyed, with a calm and untroubled eye*, all the influences of our religion, carried as they are into the inmost heart of society by our simple and beautiful forms of worship.[32]

In Wilson's hands these ideas are more complex than they seem, because they are wound up in the ideas of National Character I outlined earlier. Wilson is

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[29] John Wilson, 'The Genius and Character of Burns', 1840, repr. *Essays: Critical and Imaginative*, Vol. III (Edinburgh and London, 1857), 1-211, p. 1
[30] 'Some Observations...', op. cit. 315 [italics added]
[31] 'The Genius and Character of Burns', 177
[32] 'Some Observations...', 316 [italics added]

advancing the idea of the National Genius which, springing from the native soil, embodies the National Character of the people:

> by this sometimes unregulated and unguarded sympathy with all appertaining to his kind, and especially to his own order, he was enabled to receive into himself all modes of their simple, but not undiversified life, so that his poetry murmurs their loves and joys from a thousand fountains.[33]

Once this Romantic concept loses its cultural specificity, however, it becomes all too easy to read Wilson's remarks as a straightforward rejection of imagination in favour of mimesis. It's quite clear what the effect of the following sentence would be in the long term:

> Most other poets of rural life have looked on it through the aerial veil of imagination ... He looked around him.[34]

What really helped to fix the idea of Burns as a 'surveyor' of Scottish peasant life was the importance ascribed to understanding the topographical background of his poetry. Editions of the poems were crucial in imparting such a view: those of Allan Cunningham, beginning in 1834, set the trend and by this time most of the editions were beginning to be accompanied by landscape illustrations. The text that tied Burns up most with visual topography was *The Land of Burns* (1840), which featured a series of portraits by the pioneer of photography D.O. Hill, and descriptive prose directing the reader to topographical references.[35] This text also witnessed the first exposure to the public eye of a highly influential essay by John Wilson from which I have been quoting: 'The Genius and Character of Burns'. This long essay was also published separately before appearing again in what was to prove to be the most significant text (in terms of number of reprints) that the century was to produce: the 1843 edition published by Blackie, which also

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33 'The Genius and Character of Burns', 219
34 ibid. 2
35 *The Land of Burns: A Series of Landscapes and Portraits illustrative of the Life and Writings of the Scottish Poet* (Glasgow, 1843)

featured the highly distorting biographical account by James Currie.[36] These texts were seminal in influencing critical opinion of Burns. The 1843 edition was reprinted at least sixteen times between 1846 and 1878. It was firmly established in the minds of readers that 'place' or topography was the key to Burns's poetry, which, it had been argued, was all about translating Scottish life, living conditions and character. Wilson's articles, memoirs and editions of Burns not only gave an even stronger currency to established definitions of national identity, but made it clear that the way to understand Scotland was through literature.

It is significant in this context that the images of Burns's poems crossed disciplinary boundaries. Duncan Macmillan has argued that David Wilkie's painting *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (1837) forms '*the* canonical image of Scottish art.'[37] Wilkie and his followers in domestic genre painting frequently used literature, and Burns in particular, for their subjects; an example being Tom Faed's *His Only Pair*, drawn from two lines of 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' (lines 43-4). Faed was one of the most famous and successful of what has been described as the Wilkie imitators (in the same way as many nineteenth century poets were described as Burns imitators). His brother, John, provided illustrations of *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Tam o' Shanter* and *The Soldier's Return* for the Fine Arts Association, and illustrations of the Burns country for the Burns Festival at the Crystal Palace in 1859. The more famous Tom Faed painted Burns and Highland Mary on many occasions and had indicated his interest in literary topics through *Sir Walter Scott and his Literary Friends at Abbotsford*, two paintings illustrative of *Heart of Midlothian*, and paintings like *the Mitherless Bairn* from a poem by William Thom. The most interesting of Faed's literary allusions, however, comes in the second of a trilogy of Canadian pictures, *The Scottish Emigrants' Sunday in the*

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[36] *The Works of Robert Burns: with a complete Life of the Poet and an Essay on his Genius by Professor Wilson* (Glasgow, 1843)

[37] Duncan Macmillan, 'The Canon in Scottish art: Scottish art in the canon', *Scotlands*, 1 (1994), 87-103, p. 91 [original italics]

Backwoods, which depicts a Cotter's Saturday Night' type setting of a communal gathering around a cottage hearth led by an old man's reading from the Bible. The key denotative aspect of the painting, however, lies in the portrait of Burns which can be found in the corner of the room. The emigrants' loyalty to their Scottish roots is thus explicitly stated in the portrait and coded in the painting's narrative allusion to Burns's poem, and it is greatly significant that Faed, who was critical of Scots who left their native country for overseas settlement, should use *literary* allusions to indicate the strength of their national ties.

Inevitably, Burns became an icon of national identity for emigrant Scots who would later afford Kailyard fiction and popular entertainers like Harry Lauder an immense following. Wilson had drawn attention to the reception of Burns by exiled Scots and had used it to identify an essential Scotland that the exiles could draw out of the poet and live in again.[38] In an address at the unveiling of the statue of Burns in Central Park, New York, on October 2, 1880, George William Curtis addressed the crowds:

> Most of you, fellow citizens, were born in Scotland. There is no more beautiful country, and as you stand here, memory and imagination recall your native land... as if all the sadness of shaggy Scotland had found a voice![39]

'Essential Scotland', Curtis went on to declare, 'would live forever in the poet's verse.'[40] The extent of international interest in Burns can be observed by the exhaustive records of exhibitions, speeches and ceremonies assembled by James Ballantine in the *Chronicle of The Hundredth Birthday of Robert Burns*.[41] Ballantine chronicles 872 celebrations across Britain, America and the colonies down to the one in Copenhagen. Incredibly, John McVie estimates that this figure

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38 'The Genius and Character of Burns', op. cit. 227
39 George William Curtis, *Robert Burns: An Address* (New York, 1880), 5, 8
40 Ibid. 21
41 James Ballantine (ed.), *Chronicle of The Hundredth Birthday of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh and London, 1859).

represents only five per cent of the total number of celebrations that took place.[42] The combination of Burns scholarship and Burns Clubs meant that everywhere international Scottish identity was a 'Cotter's Saturday Night' identity.

The selective understanding of Burns that Wilson had consolidated from the enlightenment period remained in force throughout the century. 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' was still identified as the key to his work and thus to Scottish national character. To a critic in 1849 the belief remained that 'everything else that he wrote may be considered as auxiliary to the purpose shadowed forth in that poem.'[43] As the century wore on, the poem came to be seen as a scene from real life that had been captured and put in a frame to be immortalised forever: Alexander Webster called it 'a photograph from life'[44] and to another critic it was a 'picture... in print.'[45] The words photograph and picture indicate the way Burns's work was clearly being identified as performing a mimetic function closer to social history than to art. Indeed one commentator was to suggest its worth almost exclusively on these grounds:

> It could be ill spared from any collection of Burns's poetry less on account of its poetical merit than because of its historical and ethical value. It contains many feeble lines, but in the descriptive it is a faithful transcript from peasant life, and in the reflective parts it bears testimony to the moral character of the author. It reveals at once his religion and his patriotism.[46]

The poems remained a tool for understanding the man: Wilson had used 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' to defend the morality of Burns and apart from J.C. Shairp who argued that the poem showed 'how Burns could reverence the old

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[42] John McVie, *The Burns Federation: A Bi-Centenary Review* (Kilmarnock, 1959), 33
[43] Samuel Tyler, *Robert Burns as a Poet and a Man* (Dublin, 1849), 60
[44] Alexander Webster, *Burns and the Kirk: A review of what the Poet did for the Religious and Social Regeneration of the Scottish People* (Aberdeen, 1889), 66
[45] *Burns: An Essay for the Working-Classes of Scotland. Part I His influence as a Moral Teacher and Social Reformer* (Edinburgh, 1872), 20-1
[46] J. Logie Robertson, note to 'A Cotter's Saturday Night', in Robert Burns, *Selected Poems* (Oxford, 1889), 206.

national piety, however little he may have been able to practise it',[47] this poem remained the evidence used by critics who were eager to rectify what they saw as wrongful prevailing opinion of Burns's moral character.[48] Biographies and editions remained the most significant output, and in some editions the poems and biography are arranged so as to interpenetrate each other.[49] In the opening speech of the internationally reported 1896 exhibition marking the centenary of Burns's death, the chairman, Alexander Kirkpatrick, revealed just how strong the significance of Burns's life was:

> It was a life about which no biography or autobiography can tell us all we want to know. We want to get nearer to his life... Here you will see much of what you want to see. You will see the mirror on which he saw his own face.[50]

That biography was still at the forefront of Burns criticism is significant because of the way Burns had been identified as the personification of Scotland. What was said about Burns's character was understood as Scottish character: the poet-laureate Alfred Austin, for example, speaking at the same 1896 centenary celebrations, argued that Scottish people found Burns 'extolling the very ideas of life and conduct which are at the root of Scottish character.' To an Englishman, Austin continued, these presented themselves as 'the strong foundation of adamantine will... self-reverence, self-control, self-denial, and, above all, the sanctifying grace of domestic piety.'[51] The extent of the equation of Burns with Scotland is driven home most succinctly by George Gilfillan's 1879 edition which declared Burns to be 'the greatest National Poet that ever lived... a living image of his country... a microcosm of his nation.'[52]

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[47] Principal Shairp, *Robert Burns* (London, 1879), 196
[48] e.g. Peter Livingston, *Poems and Songs; with Lectures on the Genius and Works of Burns* (Edinburgh, 1871), 31; [A Scotchwoman], *Robert Burns: An Inquiry into Certain Aspects of his Life and Character and the Moral Influence of his Poetry* (London, 1886)
[49] George Gilfillan, 'Life of Burns' in *The National Burns* (London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, [1879?]); P. Hateley Waddell, *The Life and Work of Robert Burns* (Glasgow, 1867)
[50] Quoted in *Burns Chronicle*, 6 (1897), 13
[51] Ibid. 28-9
[52] George Gilfillan, 'Life of Burns' in *The National Burns*, op. cit. Vol IV, cv

The critical reception of Burns in the nineteenth century helped to create the Kailyard vision by encouraging an identity for Scottish literature that not only restricted the scope available for future writers but also encouraged readers to approach Scottish literature in certain ways. An article published in 1898 in the periodical *Literature* characterised exactly what effect this had on the idea of Scottish literature as a discrete entity:

> Burns has come to represent Scotland, and only Scotland to be adored in Burns. Therefore we have to-day not only a constant and copious flow of tolerable dialect verse, but also a local school of novelists ... The writer, whether of prose or verse, is prevented by the necessities of his market, no less than the limitations of his art, from straying outside one range of subjects ... If he will interest his countrymen he must write about them; and everything tends to make him dwell most upon the peculiarities that distinguish them from other men, to put his best work into observing and describing these, and to slur over that description of humanity which is the only subject of permanent literary work.[53]

Kailyard fiction is here given direct descent not specifically from Burns's poetry, but from the identification of that poetry as the meaning of Scotland. It was this act of identification which set up powerful canonic structures for Scottish literature and which, I would argue, led on to the employment of the critical term Kailyard. The Burns archetype established an identity for Scottish literature which meant that only work which prioritised the issue of nationality was absorbed into the context of 'Scottish literature.' Texts like James Thomson's 'City of the Dreadful Night' or Barrie's later novels could not be fitted into the available paradigm and were therefore ignored in assessments of the overall picture of Scottish cultural output. The Kailyard critics who at the end of the century concluded Scottish literature to be outdated and unrepresentative were reacting within the identity of Scottish literature which had been built up throughout the century. The power of the Burns archetype to validate an identity for the nation produced the concern over

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[53] 'The Heritage of Burns', *Literature*, III (September 17, 1898), 241-2, p.241

representation and encouraged critics to demand authentic pictures of life in Scotland.

FROM DISTINCTIVENESS TO NOSTALGIA

The equation of Burns with Scotland had become so fixed that when the second half of the century brought transition and industrial change there arose the idea that the real Scotland (the Scotland of Burns) was being eroded:

> The cause of a country is never utterly hopeless: the character of a people is never absolutely degraded; the sentence of national ruin is never finally and fatally sealed until popular song is silenced.[54]

The overwhelming tone of decadence is applied here to Burns and popular song; elsewhere in nineteenth-century criticism it is Burns and the preservation of the perishing Scots language.[55] Burns had become a lingering relic of what was seen as a fast vanishing Scotland, and Burns worship formed part of the nostalgic reminiscing for that Scotland which characterised the Scottish intellectual climate in the second-half of the century.[56] Cultural renewals which succeed in redefining the composition of the culture in question inevitably become at some stage outdated. What was seized upon as new by Lockhart and Wilson soon came to appear old, backward and useless as a meaningful cultural expression for the changing nature of Scotland. Much Scottish writing in the second half of the century is characterised by an awareness of what Archibald Geikie was to summarise in 1904 as 'the gradual decline of national peculiarities.'[57] Perhaps the two most famous works in this context are those by Carlyle and Cockburn. In his

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[54] Alex M. Walker, *A Lecture on the Poems and Songs of Burns* (Tunbridge Wells, 1860), 42-3

[55] e.g. P. Hately Waddell, *Genius and Morality of Robert Burns* (Ayr, 1859), 4-17; R.W. Hunter, *A Hundred Years After: Burns under the light of the Higher Criticism* (Edinburgh, 1896), 5; Lord Roseberry's speech at the Dumfries centenary celebrations, *Burns Chronicle*, 6 (1897), 46

[56] This climate of nostalgia took many forms. The Celtic Twilight, which is not discussed in this thesis, is nevertheless part of the same phenomenon, which in its entirety cannot be reduced solely to national criteria.

[57] Archibald Geikie, *Scottish Reminiscences* (Glasgow, 1904), 7

Reminiscences published in 1881, Carlyle paints a vivid picture of the enormity of change which had overcome Edinburgh and Scotland during the course of the century.[58] Similarly, Cockburn, in a much quoted phrase, spoke of the early years of the century as 'the last purely Scotch age that Scotland was destined to see.'[59] It wasn't simply a matter of a changing Edinburgh and Scotland - Carlyle and Cockburn were documenting the decline of a city and nation from a position of international prominence and intellectual self-confidence to one of provincialism; to what Lewis Grassic Gibbon would later succinctly term 'Scotshire.'[60] In the second half of this chapter I will examine how this climate of nostalgia helped furnish the main cultural context for Kailyard fiction and helped explain the response taken to it by Scottish critics. The two areas I will look at are song collections and volumes of reminiscences of Scottish life and character.

The many song and poetry collections published during the century represent an important intermediary between Burns and Kailyard fiction. Since MacDiarmid, Scottish poetry in the Victorian period has been viewed with embarrassment. Often discussed under the derogatory banner 'Kailyard', it has been dismissed as parochial, insular and unrepresentative of industrial Scotland. It was the many imitations of Burns which produced what the reviewer in *Literature* quoted above calls the 'copious flow of tolerable dialect verse.' Some of the most prominent Burns commentators of the early nineteenth century were at the centre of this imitative practice: Robert Tannahill, R.A. Smith and William Motherwell were the early leaders of the Paisley Burns Club formed in 1805, and the most common aspect of all the early Burns Clubs was the extensive number of imitations, odes and panegyrics to Burns that were delivered at the yearly

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[58] Carlyle's account of Christopher North was not included in editions of the *Reminiscences* until 1932. See introduction to Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences* ed. K.J. Fielding and Ian Campbell (Oxford, 1997)

[59] Quoted by Paul Scott, '"The Last Purely Scotch Age"', in *HSL 3*, 13-22, p. 15

[60] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, 'Literary Lights', in Gibbon and Hugh MacDiarmid, *Scottish Scene, or the Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn* (London, 1934), 163-75

celebrations. Robert Brown's survey of the Paisley Burns Clubs reveals the huge extent of this imitative practice which often found a place in appendices to nineteenth-century editions. Later in the century, the *Burns Chronicle* would include a lengthy list of examples in the bibliographies of its early numbers. Many of these imitations delivered in the early meetings of the Burns Clubs were subsequently published on their own standing in volumes such as Motherwell's *The Harp of Renfrewshire* (1819). The implication of this is that a 'living' literature was conceived and delivered under the banner of Burns and literary production came to be identified within a rigid archetype. Instead of forwarding literature the Burns Clubs froze it and in the process froze Scottish identity at a time when it was perceived as moving into a stage of irreparable transition. As I will show, poetry and song came more and more to be associated with a past way of life, and the act of recording songs and ballads more associated with performing the act of social history.

In his *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern* (1827), William Motherwell explained the need to anthologise songs:

> the changes which, within this half century, the manners and habits of our peasantry and labouring classes, with whom this song has been cherished, have undergone, are inimical to its further preservation.[61]

As Peter Buchan announced in his 1828 volume, the early collectors were motivated by a 'national concern' that a whole corpus of traditional, oral literature needed to be retrieved from the 'beds of oblivion.'[62] But it was not just the desire to record a vanishing literature that produced the plethora of song collections, it was the desire to record a vanishing way of life:

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[61] *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*, ed. William Motherwell (Glasgow, 1827), cii
[62] *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland, hitherto unpublished*, ed. Peter Buchan, 1828, 2 Volumes (Edinburgh, 1875), xi

> Before the march of cheap and sound literature, railways, telegraphs, the bustle and hurry of commerce, and other agencies, all tending towards a refinement of life and manners, the old customs and superstitions of the country are fast disappearing.[63]

As Motherwell makes clear, the song collections were designed to check the process of 'the rapid decay of much that we have been accustomed to love and venerate in the manners and fireside pleasures of our country's peasantry.'[64] The improvements in communication and travel between town and village were seen as contributing not only to what D.H. Edwards termed 'the almost universal diffusion of culture'[65] but to the decline of a readily identifiable national distinctiveness:

> the national peculiarities of the Scotch are fading away in the assimilating process carried on by the increasing international intercourse of modern times.[66]

The song collections were designed to put on record those national peculiarities and as such encouraged the idea that Scotland was a thing of the past. Commenting on a song by Henry Scott Riddell, John Stuart Blackie captures the tenor of the times:

> We have now a generation growing up who, subdued by the seductions of London luxury, the glitter of metropolitan and the despotism of official centralisation, are content to sit down as second fiddle and first flunkey to the imperial John Bull - glorying, as St. Paul has it, in their shame; so that a national song-writer, feeling all around him the enervating approaches of this insidious foe, is obliged to make *Scotland* YET![67]

The 'national distinctiveness' that was seen to be fading away was the same rural, peasant national distinctiveness that had been constructed out of Burns.

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[63] Malcolm M'L Harper (ed.), *The Bards of Galloway: A Collection of Poems, Songs, Ballads, &c., by Natives of Galloway* (Dalbeattie, 1889), ix.
[64] *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*, op. cit. cii
[65] D.H. Edwards, *The Poetry of Scottish Rural Life. or A Sketch of The Life and Writings of Alexander Laing* (Brechin, 1874), 5
[66] J. Clark Murray, *The Ballads and Songs of Scotland, in view of their influence on the character of the people* (London, 1874), 193-4
[67] John Stuart Blackie, *Scottish Song: Its Wealth, Wisdom, and Social Significance* (Edinburgh and London, 1889), 150

Inevitably, the song collectors drove home an anti-urban ethos in order to protect the identity that had been ascribed to Scotland through literature. It was repeatedly declared that the songs 'have emanated from the people ... the peasant and artisan of humble life,'[68] and that industrial life was inimical to the poetic capacity:

> the voice of nature in the sounding of streams, the song of birds, and the bleating of sheep differ widely from what the susceptible and poetic mind is destined to experience amidst the clanking din of shuttles in the dingy narrow workshop of the handloom weaver.[69]

Such an attitude to rural landscape is a witness to the maintenance of the ideas of Lockhart and Wilson. In *Minstrelsy Ancient and Modern*, Motherwell follows Wilson by claiming to detect the presence of a National Character in the rural peasantry: it is only the 'lower and uneducated classes of society' who retain 'primitive forms of speech, peculiar idiomatick expressions, and antique phrases' which is what makes song '*peculiarly national and characteristick*' and 'an actual embodiment of their Universal mind.'[70] It was unanimous that Scottish song was a product of the national genius; collectors were eager to stress how it formed part of the identity of a Scot, how it 'has woven itself into his countryman's habit of thought'[71] so as to 'become a vital force, passing through the blood of the great mass of people.'[72] Song was seen as the key to understanding Scotland:

> Take from that stern land of the north its legacy of song, and Scotland would cease to be Scotland, and the world would no longer be able to distinguish Scottish traits in its people. The Scotsman would not know himself; for the folk-song of his country has so entered into his being that, robbed of it, he would no longer be Scotch.[73]

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[68] *The Book of Scottish Song. A Comprehensive Collection of the Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern* (London, Glasgow and Edinburgh, 1866), lvi.
[69] Henry Scott Riddell, 'Observations on Scottish Song', in *The Modern Scottish Minstrel; or The Songs of Scotland of the Past Half Century*, ed. Charles Rogers (Edinburgh, 1855-7), 6 vols, VI, xxviii
[70] *Minstrelsy: Ancient and Modern*, iii, v [italics added]
[71] Murray, *The Ballads and Songs of Scotland*, 54
[72] James M. Macbeath, 'Introductory essay' to D.H. Edwards (ed.), *Modern Scottish Poets*, Sixteenth Series (Brechin, 1897), 117
[73] Edwards, introcution to ibid. xlii-xliii

It was anxiety that Scotland's distinctiveness would erode entirely that encouraged some editors to try and breathe new life into song-culture and argue that 'the harp would not rest even in our day.'[74] W.S. Crockett wrote in his *Minstrelsy of the Merse* that 'every county has its band of singers who are helping to swell the great chorus of national sentiment, and to keep alive with ever-increasing enthusiasm the grand old traditions and hallowed memories that cluster round the fair name of Scotia.'[75] Volumes like these were building on an established poetic archetype which allegedly defined the nation - Motherwell had written that 'every true Scot is at heart a poet' and the *Harp of Renfrewshire* kept the tradition going by anthologising new poets in its reprints of the 1819 text.[76] By far the most significant contribution to this branch of song collecting was performed by D.H. Edwards of Brechin, who in 1880 began a series of volumes which, against all the expectations of its editor, was to be hugely successful and number sixteen by 1897. This mammoth catalogue of distinctly second-rate work was described in J.H. Miller's *Literary History of Scotland* as 'a monument of wasted toil' and is discussed under the banner 'Kailyard' by Ian Campbell.[77] Although Edwards tentatively defends himself against the potential charge of 'mere bookmaking', these volumes display less of a desire to record an oral tradition than to plough the furrows of what had been established as a definition of the Scottish poetic capacity. Poems were sent in to Edwards' newspaper office for inclusion in his anthologies. Although claiming a rightful place within a single tradition, this poetry is different from the oral folklore; it is a poetry *designed* for the anthology, for print reproduction, in a way the folk tradition was manifestly not. The success of Edwards' volumes shows how 'song collecting' had changed from being fundamentally about the preserving of a *literary tradition* - with which Scott had

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74 *The Songs of Scotland* (Paisley and London, 1893), xlviii
75 W.S. Crockett, *Minstrelsy of the Merse. The Poets and Poetry of Berwickshire. A County Anthology* (Paisley, Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1893), 3
76 *The Harp of Renfrewshire*, ed. William Motherwell, 1819, repr. with additions (Paisley, 1873), iii
77 Millar, *A Literary History of Scotland*, 665n; C, 107

been concerned in his essay 'Introductory Remarks on Popular Poetry', appended to *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* in 1830 - to celebrating and preserving a *way of life*. The poems Edwards collected built on an established national literary archetype, but when mass produced they descended into something largely indiscernible from social history.

As the century progressed, collections came to be oriented around specific towns, counties or regions, exacerbating the tendency for poetry and song to perform the function of social history. Not surprisingly, it was the rural areas which were highlighted, and as with Wilson and Lockhart, editors of song collections considered local topography and the distinctiveness of their region to be a definition of the poetic capacity. The distinctiveness of Scottish literature was that its poetry emanated from the rural landscape, and frequently in these volumes it is the place, not the poet, which is being commemorated. A volume like *Hawick Songs and Song Writers*, for example, consists almost entirely of poems written about Hawick and its surrounds, not a collection of poets that the town has produced. Yarrow, not surprisingly in view of its Wordsworthian connections, is afforded the same treatment and *The Harp of Perthshire*, despite claiming through its subtitle to be an anthology of local authors, lays its greatest claim to importance through having collected the 'Perthshire songs of Burns, Scott, Hogg, and Tannahill, and others' which 'have come to be esteemed as essentially a part and parcel of our local literature.'[78]

Although the precedent for bringing together verse and tales from individual regions of Scotland was established early in the century with volumes like Motherwell's *The Harp of Renfrewshire* (which manages to stretch

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[78] Robert Murray (ed.), *Hawick Songs and Song Writers*, 3rd Edition (Hawick, 1897); R. Borland (ed.), *Yarrow: Its Poets and Poetry* (Dalbeattie, 1890); Robert Ford (ed.), *The Harp of Perthshire: A Collection of Songs, Ballads, and other Poetical Pieces chiefly by Local Authors* (Paisley and London, 1893)

Renfrewshire far enough south to include such authors as Marlowe and Shakespeare, not to mention St. Paul), the real explosion of regional collections came about in the final two decades. Virtually every town or county was represented in these volumes, and the timing is particularly crucial because it marks the moment when the printing presses in all corners of Scotland were also being swamped by the publication of parish histories. This was the great age for recording Scottish local history and the practice was to have a huge impact on the whole idiom of Scottish cultural output in the 1880s and 90s. With the song collections, therefore, it is perhaps inevitable that what had begun with Scott at the beginning of the century as a task of capturing a specifically literary tradition, had become at the century's end a practice largely indiscernible from the act of writing and reading about local history. The compiler of a history of Galloway indicated how his new volume, *Historical and Traditional Tales in Prose and Verse connected with the South of Scotland*, was:

> faithful to the impulse which prompted him to originate a history of his native district... Every tale in the collection is founded on incidents which happened, or traditions which are current in that part of the South of Scotland... [and will] contribute to the illustration of Galloway in those particulars which are generally overlooked, or but slightly treated of in history.[79]

This kind of factual verification of imaginative literature became commonplace in the second half of the century. As George Eyre Todd wrote in his edition of *Scottish Ballad Poetry*:

> true folk-song is a narrative of actual events. Its first object has been the recording of real deeds and circumstances, and it remains the furthest of all forms of composition from deliberate literary intention.'[80]

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[79] John Nicolson, *Historical and Traditional Tales in Prose and Verse connected with the South of Scotland* (Kirkcudbright, 1843), ii-iii

[80] George Eyre-Todd, *Scottish Ballad Poetry* (Glasgow, 1893), 35

Songs were valuable because they 'attract[ed] the poets away from the hot-house processes of art' into the realm of 'naturalness.'[81] They were seen as providing a real, factual window onto the lives of the people:

> Scottish songs always spring from a strong root in reality, [and] never deal with imaginary persons [because] the Poetry of the people, like their life, must be intensely real.[82]

Scottish song was located in actuality, not the imagination, and as such was seen as translating a Scottish reality:

> The poet does not arise among his countrymen to represent any new form of sentiment, but, on the contrary, to impress them more deeply with the true nature of that which has existed and exists around him.[83]

In this way, poetry and literature in general were continually being cast within a paradigm of documentary realism and into close collusion with social history. Motherwell had written in his preface that 'the value of ballads and songs to the student of history cannot be over-estimated'[84] and there are two ways in which we can see editors at the end of the century exploiting that value: firstly by identifying song as a *resource for the study* of history:

> song becomes the truest history of a people; they, properly speaking have rarely any other historian than the poet ... If song equally tends to strengthen the bonds of nationality, it is also that from which the true cast of a land's inhabitants can be gathered.[85]

and secondly by identifying song as *performing the act* of history:

> As much of our local history, particularly local, is blended with the family exploits of the times, as recorded in the olden ballads, their preservation becomes necessary, and a profitable source of useful information and delight[86]

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81 Murray, *The Ballads and Songs of Scotland*, 197, 168.
82 Blackie, *Scottish Song*, 47, 24
83 Edwards, *Modern Scottish Poets*, xxv
84 *The Harp of Renfrewshire*, iv
85 Riddell, 'Observations on Scottish Song', xxx-xxxi
86 Buchan, *Ancient Ballads and Songs of the North of Scotland*, xiv

Both of these arguments have important implications for the status that was being afforded literature. By suggesting that song was the best way of understanding 'the secret heart and character of the Scottish people',[87] any other kind of literary technique or genre was potentially going to be received as unScottish:

> Even the more studied poetry of the country, formed as it was upon classic and literary models, remains to some extent a convention also, a picture of what men wished to appear rather than a reflection of what they were. It is in the folk-song of the nation that the truest expression lies.[88]

This quote implies that it is more true to the national cause to deal in a paradigm of 'reflection' than imagination. Readers of these song collections were constantly being reminded 'of the thorough objectivity of the ballads'[89] and that they were reading stories that were 'purely historical, or are based on traditions, which may be presumed to have had originally some foundation in fact.'[90] The overall ethos of these volumes can be summed up by Alan Reid's comment in *The Bards of Angus and the Mearns*:

> The writings of these local poets over all the country, in addition to their literary value, preserve in many cases local dialects, local customs and local memories which are fast passing away.[91]

This conjunction between the imaginative and the historical is a crucial context not only for explaining why the texts labelled as Kailyard were written, but why they elicited such a negative response from Scottish critics. It was because literature was closely tied up with performing the act of social history that realism became such a paramount issue and authenticity of national image a criterion of value.

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87 Eyre-Todd, *Scottish Ballad Poetry*, 1
88 Ibid
89 Murray, *The Ballads and Songs of Scotland*, 175
90 James Maidment (ed.), *Scottish Ballads and Songs, Historical and Traditionary* (Edinburgh, 1868), ix
91 Alan Reid, *The Bards of Angus and the Mearns. An Anthology of the Counties*, (Paisley, Edinburgh, Glasgow and London), xii

The motivations behind the song-collecting merge in the second half of the century with the flourishing practice of publishing reminiscences about Scotland - the precedent for which was E.B. Ramsay's enormously successful *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character* (1857) which went through twenty two editions within fifteen years. Ramsay's objective was 'to fix and preserve a page of our domestic national annals which, in the eyes of the rising generation, is fast fading into oblivion.'[92] His book precipitated a quite astonishing vogue of writing whose collective impact was to encourage the idea that the real Scotland was a Scotland of the past. As E.J. Guthrie wrote in his own volume of Reminiscences in 1885:

> With the lapse of time many of our national and local customs which for so long a period, retained a firm and apparently lasting hold on the affections of the Scottish peasantry, have fallen into unmerited neglect.[93]

The Reminiscences were designed to check that process.

In his pioneering text, Ramsay argued that cultural assimilation with England had its roots in the assimilation of language, and that the changes in national and local customs were as a result of the diffusion of a uniform culture:

> The facilities for moving, not merely from place to place in our country, but from one country to another, the spread of knowledge and information by means of periodical publications and newspapers, and the incredibly low prices at which literary works are produced, must have great effects.[94]

Ramsay stressed the importance of his text to emigrant Scots, drawing attention to the publication of an American edition and noting how 'it has awakened Scottish feelings and memories from countrymen long separated from the land of their birth.'[95] Writers of other volumes of Reminiscences were equally aware of Scottish

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[92] E.B. Ramsay, Dedication to James Andrew Marquis of Dalhousie in *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*, 7th Edition (Edinburgh, 1861), v
[93] E.J. Guthrie, *Old Scottish Customs Local and General* (London and Glasgow, 1885), 1.
[94] Ramsay, *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*, 21st Edition (Edinburgh, 1872) 237
[95] Ibid. xi-xii

emigrants forming an important part of their audience,[96] and the obvious widespread reading of Ramsay's text established the idea that the lost Scotland he was documenting could be the only focus for the future if there was to be a maintenance of a specifically Scottish tradition in literature. His work was crucial in encouraging a nostalgic stance towards Scotland and Scottish literature.

The Scotland which was lamented by the Reminiscences was, inevitably by now, descended from Burns. Paxton Hood took the familiar poetic image as the archetype of his lost Scotland:

> Would it possible to write the "Cotter's Saturday Night" now? Even if Scotland had a Burns, would such a picture be any longer true of the social life of the country?[97]

As if in resistance to the erosion of that 'picture', volumes of Reminiscences dealt almost entirely within rural settings. It was affirmed that 'the vast and houseless moors are more cheerful than the cities'[98] and that 'curiosities of human character are only to be met with in the "by-ways of life."'[99] Even in a text like Peter Mackenzie's massive three volume *Reminiscences of Glasgow and the West of Scotland*, the emphasis is expressly against anything which deals with the industrial condition of the people:

> a respectable deputation waited on us to see if we could not introduce something in these pages about some old strikes and trades' union in Glasgow, now becoming so prolific, if not dangerous; or at least setting society in many places at extreme variance with each other - very much, we think, to be deplored. "Trades' strikes, and trades' unions! No indeed, gentlemen, I will have nothing to do with them.[100]

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[96] e.g. Rev. Walter Gregor, *An Echo of the Olden Time from the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh, Glasgow and Peterhead, 1874), vi; William Harvey, *Scottish Life and Character in Anecdote and Story* (London and Stirling, 1900), viii

[97] Paxton Hood, *Scottish Characteristics* (London, 1883), 62

[98] Ibid. 299

[99] J.S. Neish, *In the By-ways of Life: A Series of Sketches of Forfarshire Characters* (Dundee, 1881), iii

[100] Peter Mackenzie, *Reminiscences of Glasgow and the West of Scotland*, 3 volumes (Glasgow, 1865), III, 22

The anti-urban ethos reinforced an idea which barely needed reinforcing - that the true Scotland was the fast-vanishing rural Scotland. Authors of the Reminiscences presented the past as a world of simplicity, as an 'age of ignorance'[101] and a time when the Scottish village lived in a condition of self-sufficiency. As James Russell said of Yarrow:

> neither spring-carriages nor gigs were seen on the narrow undulating road ... Letters reached the inhabitants of Yarrow only at irregular intervals ... It is this self-contained life of homely kindness that appears throughout the 'Reminiscences'[102]

Taken as a whole, the Reminiscences are a crucial context in which to understand the cultural climate in which Kailyard was written and would have been read by native Scots. Their sheer number engulfs the Scottish publishing climate making the cultural idiom of the second half of the century one of ubiquitous nostalgia. The texts which would come to be labelled Kailyard must be seen as growing out of this fertile soil but the key issue in terms of why there came to be such a crisis in the literary establishment over the publication of those texts is the blurring of fiction and non-fiction. The Reminiscences, so like Kailyard in many ways, were the inevitable result of the national archetype which had been circulated by Lockhart and Wilson and fixed in place by the reception of Burns. They had forged a literary climate where imaginative stories and factual anecdotes about real places could go together. Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren's use of an identifiable geographical place as a background to their fiction explains why it was the social and historical accuracy of their fiction that Scottish critics in particular focused upon. The fact that the Reminiscences swamped the printing presses at the same time as the parish histories and the regional poetry collections meant that the demarcations between fact and fiction were considerably blurred.

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101 Rev. William Paul, *Past and Present of Aberdeenshire, or Reminiscence of Seventy Years* (Aberdeen, 1881), 4

102 James Russell, *Reminiscences of Yarrow* (Edinburgh and London, 1886), xv

Ramsay identified his work as:

> contribut[ing] something to the materials of history, by exhibiting social customs and habits of thought which at a particular era were characteristic of a race.[103]

Other writers identified their Reminiscences as presenting an alternative, more authentic history by concentrating on 'the lives of the common people' in the 'more retired and humble walks of life.'[104] Some volumes veer extremely close to the status of parish history: John Martine's book on Haddington juxtaposed 'Reminiscences' with 'Notices' in its title[105] and many volumes indicate that they are referring to real people and using real names.[106] Most editors, however, were keen to dissociate their work from the practice of history. The author of the 'Sketches and Reminiscences' of *Auld Ayr* hoped his text might 'assist the future Historian of Ayr'[107] and in his volume on Arbroath, J.M. M'Bain mapped out a different ground from the writing of history:

> I do not pretend in what follows to give a history of Arbroath during the Victorian era. I have merely, as indicated in the title page, endeavoured to give what may be called a homely account of the outstanding events and changes which have taken place during the past half-century[108]

M'Bain nevertheless made clear that he had 'taken pains to verify' his information 'by documentary or other reliable evidence'[109] and this is characteristic of the way most volumes defined themselves as historically accurate accounts which set out

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[103] Ramsay, *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*, 21st Edition, viii
[104] *Crieff: Its Traditions and Characters with Anecdotes of Strathearn* (Edinburgh, 1881), v; *Glimpses of the Olden Time. Being Extracts illustrative of the Social Life and Manners of the Olden Time*, compiled by Samuel Carment (Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee, 1893), vi
[105] John Martine, *Reminiscences and Notices of Fourteen Parishes of the County of Haddington* (Edinburgh, 1890), vii-viii
[106] e.g. Rev. Charles Rogers, *Familiar Illustrations of Scottish Character* (London and Edinburgh, 1861); Neish, *In the By-ways of Life*; Donald MacLeod, *Past Worthies of the Lennox: A Garland of their Droll Sayings and Doings* (Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1894)
[107] Preface to *Auld Ayr: Sketches and Reminiscences, chiefly descriptive of Ayr since the beginning of the 19th century* (Ayr, 1884)
[108] J.M. M'Bain, *Arbroath: Past & Present. Being Reminiscences Chiefly Relating to the Last Half Century* (Arbroath, 1887), i.
[109] ibid. ii.

not to document life in the parish but to provide glimpses of a way of life in anecdotal form. Ramsay was interested in documenting the changes lying 'upon the surface of social life,'[110] and in so doing hoped to achieve a different kind of history:

> the object of this work is *not* to string together more funny stories, or to collect amusing anecdotes...The purport of these pages has been throughout to illustrate Scottish life and character, by bringing forward those modes of form and expression by which alone our national peculiarities can be familiarly illustrated and explained.[111]

Subsequent Reminiscences were to argue for their anecdotes as holding the same capacity to 'illustrate' because drawn from real life.[112] Ramsay suggested that in proverbs the 'characteristics of a people are always found'[113] and collections of proverbs regularly found their way into the Reminiscences, where they were cited as being 'the great book out of which it is easy to read [a nation's] character.'[114]

'PALTRY DUDS'

So ubiquitous were the Reminiscences that they came to define the idiom of Scottish culture at the end of the century. In its review of *Auld Licht Idylls*, the *Spectator* considered Barrie's work to be 'a complete and welcome contrast to the "paltry duds" which are nowadays printed by the dozen as pictures of humble and religious life in Scotland.'[115] That Barrie's work could be singled out from the Reminiscences in this way is testament not only to their prominence in critical discussion, but also to the way demarcations between history and fiction had

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110 *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*, 21st Edition, 4
111 Ibid. xxxi [original italics]
112 See, for example, Gordon Fraser, *Wigtown and Whithorn: Historical and Descriptive Sketches, Stories and Anecdotes, illustrative of the Racy Wit & pawky Humour of the District* (Wigtown, 1877), passim.; T.F. Henderson, *Old-World Scotland: Glimpses of its Modes and Manners* (London, 1893); Harvey, *Scottish Life and Character in Anecdote and Story*, viii
113 *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*, 21st Edition, 135
114 Hood, *Scottish Characteristics*, 255. See also James Donald (ed.) *Scottish Proverbs* (Glasgow, 1881), ix
115 review of *Auld Licht Idylls*, *Spectator* (May 5, 1888), 609, [italics added]

become increasingly blurred. Reminiscences had become openly fictional: John Gordon Barbour stated that he was delivering 'historical' information in the form of 'tales';[116] M.F. Conolly declared his 'Tales, Legends, and Sketches' to be 'for the most part founded on facts' but at the same time 'doubtless all more or less mixed up with what is fictitious and imaginative.'[117] Alexander Lawson suggested a similar mingling of fact and fiction:

> Where historical facts are given in the book, the Author has spared no pains in verifying them from the most authentic authorities. In the fictitious parts he has allowed his imagination to roam unbridled at its own secret will.[118]

As the volumes of Reminiscences became more numerous, the mingling of 'historical facts' with 'unbridled imagination' became ever more dense. David Ogilvy Robertson's text *Long Ago Legends of Clova*, published in 1872, focuses on Glen Clova, which was later to become the setting for Glen Quharity, the home of the Dominie in Barrie's early novels. Robertson's preface suggests this to be a book of Reminiscences: he calls his 'tales', '"short and simple annals of the poor,"' which aimed to 'leave a pleasing memory of "bygone days in Prosen" and Glen Clova.'[119] The fictional ('tales') is thus uncomplicatedly tied up with the factual:

> the stories are to some degree founded on fact, though in embellishing them the author has endeavoured to throw into them as much of the characteristics of the glen folk as is possible[120]

This is a book of fictional stories that lays claim to fact not just in relating factual events but in claiming to capture the essence of the character of a place and its people. Though avowedly fictional, Robertson's stories are also historical; they are

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116 John Gordon Barbour, *Unique Traditions chiefly of the West and South of Scotland* (London and Glasgow, 1886)
117 M.F. Conolly, *Fifiana: or, Memorials of the East of Fife* (Glasgow, 1869), v-vi
118 Alexander Lawson, *Tales, Legends and Traditions of Forfarshire* (Forfar, Edinburgh and Glasgow, 1891), 4
119 David Ogilvy Robertson, *Long Ago Legends of Clova* (Edinburgh, 1872), i
120 Ibid. ii

Reminiscences of a past age, and they make explicit topographical references. For example:

> About two miles to the west of this as you go towards the head of the glen, within a short distance of the farm of Braedounie, on the left hand side of the road, and nestling under the frowning mass of the Whitebents, you may perceive a cottage.[121]

Such a narrative technique bears hints of the tourist guide book and indeed in his preface Robertson points out that he considers 'the traveller' to be an integral component of his audience. But *Long Ago Legends of Clova* are stories and could be easily contextualised as Kailyard fiction.

There were many other similar volumes which mingled fact with fiction. James Thomson's *Recollections of A Speyside Parish Fifty Years Ago* claims itself as a factual account of life, referring to real people and real events, but nevertheless presents the recollections in the form of poetry or story. Hugh Muir's *Reminiscences and Sketches* of Rutherglen are also composed in the form of a poem, together with footnotes and endnotes which elaborate at length (covering more pages than the poetry) on the topographical and historical references made in the body of the text. The preface, by W.F. Stevenson, makes absolutely clear the priorities of the text:

> It is not claimed for these verses that they reach a very high standard of poetry. It is claimed for them that they record in a kindly way some of the best thoughts and deeds of those that have gone before... these pages will have served their end if they form a pleasing record of the places and persons that now, or in former years, have occupied the stage[122]

The corollary which existed between social history and literature was so strong that Muir could easily use a literary genre to record his factual account.

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121 Ibid. 21

122 introduction to Hugh Muir, *Reminiscences and Sketches: Being a Topographical History of Rutherglen and Suburbs* (Glasgow, 1890), x-xi

These volumes of Reminiscences show how writing fiction or poetry was often integrated into the act of relaying facts about the past. It is this integration of history and literature - between facts and story - which, as a dominating characteristic of Scottish publishing output in the final two decades of the century, furnished the more immediate Scottish climate in which Kailyard could be read and thus explains much of the response taken to them by Scottish critics. It would even be possible to say that the Reminiscences virtually become Kailyard fiction. As late as 1900 - six years after the appearance of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* - volumes were still being published which followed the same pattern. William Gairdner's *Glengoyne: Reminiscences of the Parish and its People* achieves its effects through an explicit merging of fact and fiction. The first chapter, entitled 'The Parish and its Former Inhabitants,' is descriptive and reads like social history. The second, however, entitled 'I visit Woodhead', together with subsequent chapters throughout the two volumes, read like fiction: there is a great deal more showing than telling, characters are allowed to speak for themselves (and they do so in Scots) and the word 'story' is frequently incorporated into the chapter titles. The presence of the authorial 'I' nostalgically relaying facts about the past disappears. But having largely taken us away from the strictly documentary intentions that the preface intimated - 'describing the character and life of certain inhabitants of the Parish'[123] - the 'Postscript' returns us to that context by detailing what has happened ten years on to the characters about whom we have just read. Having led us into a world of story-telling this text abruptly re-asserts its claims to be documenting real people, real events, real life.

It was publications like these that were engulfing the Scottish printing presses both before and after the publication of Barrie's early fiction. At the time when parish histories were out in force, literary output was being identified within

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123 William Gairdner, *Glengoyne: Reminiscences of the Parish and its People* (Edinburgh, 1900), xi

a climate where the act of recording a way of life was seen as paramount. Indeed one writer stretches the definition of the genre of Reminiscences to explicitly include literary writers within it:

> I have tried to give glimpses and sketches of many of the quaint customs, the curious oddities of style and dress, the old-fashioned habitudes of thought, and the strongly-marked individualities of the older generation, which are fast vanishing before the breath of so-called modern progress. I humbly trust that my descriptions of the glen, the village, and country town life; the school games and schoolboy rhymes, the rural industries, the queer characters, the humorous episodes, the peculiar institutions, the intellectual and religious outlook of the older generation, etc. etc., may interest the general reader, *and form an acceptable contribution to the deeply-interesting volume of Scottish history reminiscence and portraiture which has been enriched by such masters of the craft as Galt, Scott, Dean Ramsay, Barrie, Crockett, George MacDonald, and many others.*[124]

Prominent nineteenth century Scottish authors, past and present, are here uncomplicatedly contextualised with the archetypal Reminiscence author. Here, literature *is* Reminiscence.

It is now easy to see what the *Spectator* meant when it spoke of 'paltry duds'. Fictional tales of humble life in rural Scotland were numerous at the time and one further example can be mentioned in order to show why *Auld Licht Idylls* was seen as a significant break with the trend. Published in 1882, John Strathesk's *Bits from Blinkbonny, or Bell o' the Manse*, is a forgotten precursor of Kailyard fiction.[125] It tells the story of life in an imaginary Scottish parish during the 1840s. The dates inevitably mean the book deals with the Disruption and the story of Bell's marriage is told against the backdrop of events in the Church. In a preface, Strathesk pointed out that 'Blinkbonny was selected as a pretty name for a Scottish village, but the author himself cannot fix the precise locality' (v). The imaginary

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[124] James Inglis, *Oor Ain Folk: Being Memories of Manse Life in the Mearns and a Crack aboot Auld Times*, 2nd Edition (Edinburgh, 1894), x [italics added]

[125] John Strathesk, *Bits from Blinkbonny, or Bell o' the Manse: A Tale of Scottish Village Life Between 1841 and 1851* (Edinburgh, 1882)

location sets Strathesk's text apart from the Reminiscences, but his work is motivated by the same concern to depict a passing or passed way of life. In Dean Ramsay mode, he hoped that his book would succeed in 'preserving a few of the floating traditions of the passing generations which are so rapidly being swept away by the absorbing whirlpool of these bustling times' (vii). As a result, although he points out that 'a good deal of imported matter has been required to form a connected narrative,' he is keen to stress that 'most of the incidents are founded on fact' (v). The story reads like a factual account, the heavy intrusion of the narrator - who is surely meant to be the author himself - makes the work more explicitly factual than, say, *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk*, which deals with the same historical events. The work sold very well indeed and the opinions of the press, tied in as advertisements in future editions, show that it was well received not only in Scotland but in England, North America, Australia and New Zealand as well. The *Huntly Express* drew comparisons in Blinkbonny's favour with *Johnny Gibb* and the *Bristol Mercury* considered that 'since the days of Sir Walter Scott there have been few more graphic or accurate sketches of Scotch peasant life.'[126] The work was translated into French - *Le Pasteur de Blinkbonny* - and Strathesk was persuaded to pen a sequel, *More Bits from Blinkbonny* (1886), which took the story back to the 1830s where the author/narrator tells of his youth.

Reviewing *A Window in Thrums* in *Blackwood's*, Margaret Oliphant discussed Barrie's novel within the context of fiction like *Bits from Blinkbonny*. Finding in Barrie's work both 'the profoundest poetry' and an 'extraordinary literal truth', she proceeded to attack his contemporaries in the field of national literature:

> it is difficult to view without some consternation the host of little books which are finding their way to immense popularity in Scotland ... The books called "Carlowrie," "Aldersyde," "Blinkbonny," "Glenairlie," &c are cheap books, perfectly well adapted, with their mild love-stories and abundant marriages, for

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[126] Quoted as advertisment in John Strathesk, *More Bits from Blinkbonny* (Edinburgh, 1886)

> the simpler classes, especially of women who know nothing higher in society than the minister and his wife, and believe that all the world lieth in wickedness except Scotland ... it is sad to be told that these productions are regarded as representatives of a national school.[127]

Barrie, by contrast, was to Oliphant 'a disciple to whom Sir Walter would have held out his kind hand, and in whom we can take an honest pride.' Oliphant is making a stand here on the shaping of Scottish literary history. She is demanding the canonical construction - or deconstruction in this instance - of ideas about national schools. Her article predates the application of the term Kailyard, and yet her sentiments and concerns are similar to Millar and the other contemporary Scottish critics I discussed in my introduction. The key point, of course, is that she separates Barrie off from the host of little books' which she might have termed Kailyard if the epithet was hers. Before Crockett, Maclaren and a host of other writers cashed in on his success, Barrie seemed to offer the hope that tales of Scottish village life could attain a considerably higher level of literary achievement than those attacked by Oliphant. But the ubiquity of the vogue shifted attention away from literary achievement towards representation of the nation. Barrie was quickly brought in as the head of a villainous school and the artistic qualities of his work recognised by Mrs Oliphant were lost sight of, subsumed within the Kailyard context. The equation of Burns with Scotland and the conjunction between fiction and non-fiction which characterised much of the ideas on Scottish literature in the nineteenth century created the conditions necessary for the evolution of that critical context. As the following chapter will show, the corresponding vogue for regional fiction at the end of the century contributed to the Kailyard context by creating a reviewing climate which did much to promote the idea that the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren was a factual description of life in Scotland.

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127 [Margaret Oliphant], review of *A Window in Thrums*, *Blackwood's*, (August 1889), 262-6, p.265. *Glenairle or the Last of the Graemes* (1884) by Robina F. Hardy; *Carlowrie* (1884), *Aldersyde* (1883) by Annie S. Swan.

II

KAILYARD, REGIONALISM AND BARRIE'S IDYLLIC FICTION

> Few things are more remarkable in the recent history of our literature, than the rise of a new school of Scottish fiction, drawing its inspiration from locality and national character.
> (1895)[1]

> An amusing and somewhat significant remark was recently overheard in the salon of Mudie's Library. Said a young lady, of the type upon which publishers of the ordinary three-volume novel flourish, "Will you please send me a new book, something very nice and interesting you know; but please not Scotch, everything is so Scotch just now."
> (1897)[2]

In his book *The Haunted Study*, Peter Keating argues that 'it was Scotland that came for a few years at the end of the century to typify regionalism in fiction.'[3] Much of the success of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren obviously turned on the prevailing taste for local colour which experienced its heyday in the last third of the century. The bibliographer Lucien Leclaire classifies the period after 1870 as 'The Regional Novel Proper' and considers that Barrie marked 'the opening of a new fashion in the regional novel' - the sentimental - which was followed and exaggerated by many.[4] Unfortunately, Leclaire does not define what he means by sentimental, and his reference book as a whole fails to consider the changing attitude towards the regional in fiction in the latter part of the century. As Robin Gilmour has argued, the respectability of the regional or provincial novel diminished under the influence of Matthew Arnold, whose theories on

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1 *Times* (January 19, 1895), 4
2 Rev. J. Williams Butcher, 'The Fiction of Scottish Life and Character: A Comparative study of Barrie, Crockett and "Ian Maclaren,"' *Great Thoughts* (August-September 1897), 307-8, 331-2, 346, p. 307
3 *HS*, 337
4 Lucien Leclaire, *A General Analytical Bibliography of the Regional Novelists of the British Isles 1800-1950* (Claremont, 1954), 163

provincialism were expressed in essays like 'The Literary Influence of Academies' (1864).[5] Only after Arnold does the pejorative connotation of the word 'provincial' really ignite, and only then might the non-metropolitan audience be expected to adopt a position of superiority over the barbarian 'other':

> Arnold's formulation of Culture as a transcendent value is a crucial development, because it drove a wedge between regionalism and culture, stigmatising the one as enfeebled provincialism, and raising the other above the claims of time and place.[6]

Such an attitude towards the provincial is markedly different from that articulated by mid-century novelists. George Eliot, for example, could subtitle *Middlemarch* 'A Story of Provincial Life' without any fear that her work would be dismissed as parochial or marginal. If Arnold's purpose was to promote a position of superiority in the centre, then it duly resulted in an attitude of condescension towards the provincial that did not diminish the taste for regionalism but resulted in a considerable increase in the number of novels which attempted to outline a well-defined non-metropolitan locality. Regional fiction at the end of the century was, as a reviewer of *Auld Licht Idylls* put it, all about 'introduc[ing] Southern folk to some quaint characters and customs which they will not easily forget.'[7] The trap for regional novelists - especially those who employed whatever might be considered 'the sentimental' - was that their fiction was always liable to result in a patronising of the region concerned. This particular taste is well captured by Rev. J. Williams Butcher, who effected a sharp we/them distinction in his article in *Great Thoughts* in 1897:

> Certainly within the last few years we have witnessed a new departure in fiction. We have been introduced to those who live "far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife," and to our

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[5] Robin Gilmour, 'Regional and Provincial in Victorian Literature', in R.P. Draper (ed.) *The Literature of Region and Nation* (Basingstoke, 1989), 51-60
[6] Ibid. 57
[7] *London Quarterly Review*, 72 (1889), 189

> surprise, we have found that their life is not entirely monotonous and wearisome[8]

Butcher went on to cast the provincial into an escapist paradigm:

> Thrums and Drumtochty and the Grey Galloway land are as familiar as those frequented holiday haunts to which we turn in longing desire, when the tired and jaded mind calls loudly for quiet and for rest.

Much Kailyard criticism has picked up on this taste by highlighting the Edenic vision of this fiction and dismissing it as both an evasion of reality and a straight-forward concession to audience demand. J.H. Millar, for example, complained about 'the cynical disregard of true art' and the 'studied "playing to the gallery"' in Barrie's *The Little Minister*.[9] Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren, the argument runs, were all too happy to patronise their own people to earn some money.

Developments in regional fiction made it seem that local colour or dialect novelty were handy resources which second-rate writers could turn to in the security of an inevitable audience demand. Accordingly, the closing years of the century witnessed a growing concern over whether a lot of the fiction published could really be considered literature at all. An article published in *Literature* in 1898 voiced concern over the link between regional fiction and social history:

> When one sees a novelist openly eulogised on the score of the time and expense that he has devoted to the accumulation of local colour, it is time to make a protest.[10]

A related charge was made concerning the use of dialect. Emma Letley has shown how Maclaren does not base his Scots on verisimilitude but parades it as an exotic foreign idiom tailored to meet audience demand,[11] and contemporary opinion was similarly unsettled by the apparent ease of writing dialect fiction. Another article

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[8] Butcher, 'The Fiction of Scottish Life and Character', 307
[9] Millar, *A Literary History of Scotland*, 656
[10] 'Local Colour', *Literature*, II (April 23, 1898), 463-4
[11] Emma Letley, *From Galt to Douglas Brown: Nineteenth-century Fiction and Scots Language* (Edinburgh, 1988), 218-59. See also J. Derrick McClure, *Scots and its Literature* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1995)

published in *Literature*, again in 1898, identified Kailyard fiction as part of 'The Domination of Dialect'[12] and a 'Cockney' writer in the *Glasgow Evening Times* cynically mocked the success of Kailyard fiction along similar lines:

> there may be something else in the work of Messrs Crockett, Maclaren and Co. besides the dialect, but I for one have never been able to find it.[13]

Such was the success of Kailyard that it quickly became the subject of further satirical attack in the pages of *Punch*. In 1895 a cartoon entitled 'The Latter-Day Taste' appeared, which showed a publisher being offered a collection of short stories and asking if they are 'written in any unintelligible Scotch dialect.' 'Certainly not,' replies the author. 'Then', says the publisher, 'I'm afraid they're of not the slightest use to me.'[14]

Concerns like these indicate a growing suspicion about the relationship between popularity and literary value, suspicions which would later explode into intense debate.[15] The regional vogue undoubtedly furnished a taste for Kailyard but individual writers were not incapable of working within its contexts for their own fictional designs. In the second half of this chapter I will look at the early novels of J.M. Barrie - *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums* - the texts which are most commonly labelled as Kailyard. I will argue that although Barrie fits into the context of regional fiction in that his Thrums is a clearly-outlined territory patently modelled on Kirriemuir, the rhetorical strategy of his early texts is deliberately fictional and does not, on the whole, attempt to give a documentary account of life in Scotland. Firstly, however, we need to establish the critical context which makes my discussion of Barrie's *fictional* qualities necessary,

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12 'The Domination of Dialect,' *Literature*, II (May 14, 1898), 547
13 'A Cockney's Estimate of Crockett', *Glasgow Evening Times* (February 4, 1897)
14 Reproduced on p. 73
15 This issue will be discussed in depth in chapter 5

PUNCH, OR THE LONDON CHARIVARI.

THE LATTER-DAY TASTE.

Author. "I 'VE GOT HERE SOME SHORT STORIES THAT I AM ANXIOUS TO PUBLISH."
Publisher. "LET ME WARN YOU. MAY I ASK IF THEY 'RE WRITTEN IN ANY UNINTELLIGIBLE SCOTCH DIALECT?" *Author.* "CERTAINLY NOT."
Publisher. "THEN I 'M AFRAID THEY 'RE NOT OF THE SLIGHTEST USE TO US."

Punch (December 7, 1895), 274

because for all the visible artifice in Barrie's early work, his fiction was quickly received by non-Scottish critics and readers as a document of life in Scotland. When S.R. Crockett and Ian Maclaren built on Barrie's success, the potential for an image of Scotland to be validated to an international audience was strenghtened. The context of regionalism is crucial in explaining why authenticity came to be such a critical issue for future Scottish intellectuals and why the artistic strategies of Barrie's early work were ignored.

REALISM AND ROMANCE: FACT OR FICTION?

In the second half of the century, Regional fiction was characterised by a deliberate blurring of realism and romance. In his preface to *Lorna Doone* (1869), R. D. Blackmore terms his story a 'Romance' and denies its status as 'a historic novel.' He nevertheless claims that the story leans towards the actual:

> And yet he [the author] thinks that the outlines are filled in more carefully, and the situations (however simple) more warmly coloured and quickened, than a reader would expect to find in what is called a 'legend'. And he knows that any son of Exmoor, chancing on this volume, cannot fail to bring to mind the nurse-tales of his childhood - the savage deeds of the outlaw Doones in the depth of Bagworthy Forest, the beauty of the hapless maid brought up in the midst of them, the plain John Ridd's Herculean power, and (memory's too congenial food) the exploits of Tom Faggus.[16]

Blackmore is deliberately upsetting boundaries between fact and fiction here by implying that the real land of Exmoor is composed of story and legend, of which his text is about to play a further part. The tremendous vogue for the Doone valley which followed publication certainly justifies Blackmore's point and shows that a text did not have to be completely composed of regional or historical accuracy in order to generate tourist interest. Blackmore's technique combines realism and

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[16] R.D. Blackmore, 'Author's Preface', *Lorna Doone*, 1869, ed. Sally Shuttleworth (Oxford and New York, 1989), xxxiii

romance. He sets his story within a real historical moment - the Monmouthshire rebellion - and drops dates to exacerbate the sense of a factual historical setting. He also fills out the particulars of his regional setting with detail and precision. Set against this accuracy, however, the contrasts between city and country turn the region into the typical escapist rural world, and John Ridd's Scott-like involvement in the political affairs of the rebellion, which take him away from Exmoor to the gritty realism of London, is counterpointed by the romance plot in which his love for Lorna takes place within a fairy land completely divorced from the actual. The same technique of mingling realism with romance is used by George MacDonald[17] and *Lorna Doone* was a text which gave great sustenance to the regional vogue. It was a vogue which allowed interest in the real place to be generated even if that place was, as here, deliberately romanticised. But whilst the regional setting of a work of fiction did not restrict the capacity for novelists to work within established fictional genres, the sociological status of fiction - the way in which it was reviewed and used as a resource for tourism and historical study - became such that novelists could easily be identified as reporting life in their chosen region in a primarily factual way to the exclusion of any other artistic intention. These mechanisms were crucial in enabling Kailyard to be understood by non-Scottish readers as imparting a realistic depiction of life in Scotland.

Some of the vocabulary used in the immediate reception of Kailyard fiction made it very easy for a factual response to be taken by readers. The *Athenaeum* found Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls* 'very graphic' and containing 'observant insight' and 'vivid description.'[18] It is phrases like these, which echo the kind often used dismissively in relation to French naturalism, that are of crucial significance to the way Kailyard fiction came to be seen by Scottish intellectuals as dangerous in its

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[17] see David S. Robb, 'Realism and Fantasy in the Fiction of George MacDonald', in *HSL 3*, 275-290

[18] *Athenaeum* (May 5, 1888), 565

capacity to validate to outsiders a picture of Scotland. When Dr. James Moffatt announced that 'it is the whimsical local colour which saves "The Little Minister" from becoming ordinary,'[19] his phrase seems almost oxymoronic. But local colour was local colour, and in order for a factual, realistic impression to be taken from your region, you didn't have to present it in the manner of Gilbert White or a social history book.

As the imperial age expanded and new worlds were opened up to the armchair reader, the novel remained an art-form which was by no means autonomous from the realm of social history; it could often be used by readers to widen their knowledge of unknown geographical places. Kenneth Graham notices that in criticism of the novel during the period 1865-1900, 'there is a fairly common inability to distinguish between fiction and history, or biography,' and that this was particularly applicable for fiction dealing with the colonies: 'Kipling ... is often valued mainly as a recorder of facts about Anglo-Indian society.'[20] This fact of Victorian literary theory is crucial and it is one which, if taken into greater account, might enable Scottish Victorian culture to be seen in a more respectful light. In attempting to find reasons why Scotland failed to produce a social-problem novel, we should perhaps focus not on the words 'social problem' but on 'novel,' because it is clearly inaccurate to say that Scotland failed to produce social criticism. Imagine, for example, what might have happened if Hugh Miller, to say nothing of Carlyle, had not deliberately shirked the novel form. But hitherto, critics have seemed impervious to literary or generic distinctions which seem to slip by unnoticed in the more immediate discussion of whether the text performs a realistic portrayal of national identity. For example, lamenting the defeat of 'the realities of Scottish life' by 'the picture of Scott-land,' J.M. Reid argued that by contrast

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[19] Dr. James Moffatt, 'J. M. Barrie and His Books', *Bookman* (October, 1910), 21-6, p. 21
[20] G, 13

> Hugh Miller's *My Schools and Schoolmasters* (with his other autobiographical writings) and Alexander's novel *Johnnie Gibb of Gushetneuk*, are books of permanent value which deal honestly with a contemporary scene well known to their authors.[21]

The coupling of autobiography and novel here is one made also by Kurt Wittig,[22] and the complicated, neglected question of where non-fiction stops and fiction begins, discussed in the preceding chapter, is made all the more interesting by both contemporary reviews of William Alexander's work, which indicate that in many cases his texts were not understood as novels, and David Robb's recent suggestion that Hugh Miller's autobiography 'approaches the form of a novel.'[23]

The absence in the Victorian period of any explicit demarcations between fiction and non-fiction meant that any literature which dealt with a recognisable geographical place was bound to be seen to some extent as a factual, descriptive account. But the key point is that this is inevitably of greater importance to Scotland than it is to Dorset or Devon. Turning their regions into the pastoral world of *Under the Greenwood Tree* or the romantic fairy land of *Lorna Doone* was not likely to result in Hardy or Blackmore being seen as betrayers of the Dorset or Devonshire cause. Where the literary representation of a nation is concerned, however, there is going to be a greater call for adherence to social realities, and the demands put forward by Scottish Kailyard commentators, both contemporary and subsequent, were replicated in Ireland: a correspondent to *Literature* in 1900 wrote in complaint of the fictional misrepresentation of the Irish peasant, and stressed the value which would be found if the true 'drab-coloured picture' was presented instead.[24] There was an anxious need for realism within fictional representations of the nation.

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21 J.M. Reid, *Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 1945), 15
22 Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*, 253
23 David S. Robb, 'Miller and Edinburgh: *My Schools and Schoolmasters*,' *Scottish Literary Journal*, 22, 2 (November, 1995), 14-28
24 [From an Irish Correspondent], 'The Irish Peasant in Fiction', *Literature*, VI (May 5, 1900), 347-8, p.348

I showed in chapter 1 how the emergence of Kailyard was exactly contemporary with the mass publication of parish histories in Scotland. Inevitably, the boundaries between fiction and history were blurred. *Auld Licht Idylls* was seen as a 'successful attempt to preserve the features of one locality;'[25] Barrie became known as a 'conservator,'[26] and as the 'photographer of Thrums.'[27] Articles and letters were written to journals debating the genealogy of the Auld Licht sect[28] and the history of the Auld Lichts in Kirriemuir.[29] The narrator was seen as giving 'a kind of natural history' of Thrums, which, it was immediately established, was 'Kirriemuir, in Forfarshire.'[30] Comparisons were made with Richard Jefferies, which seem entirely inappropriate - Barrie rarely ventures out of doors let alone describes natural life.[31] All of these trends suggest a need to see Barrie as primarily a historian rather than an artist. Even in *The Little Minister*, a work which attempted to break out of the sometimes plotless, sketch-like quality of the earlier Thrums stories, the attributes which were seized upon were those of the historian:

> The fact is, Mr. Barrie has just taken the common people with whom he was acquainted in his boyhood, and has set them down in print.[32]

The error here is that Barrie was not writing about things which he had seen but the *remembered stories* of his mother. Barrie's texts, however, were quickly seized upon as autobiographical. *Margaret Ogilvy* was 'the key to his life and writings' and Auld Licht Presbyterianism (completely died out in Scotland by the 1890s) 'the

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25 *Athenaeum* (May 5, 1888), 565
26 review of *Margaret Ogilvy*, *Spectator* (January 30, 1897), 175
27 review of *My Lady Nicotine*, *Spectator* (June 7, 1890), 800
28 e.g. [William Robertson Nicoll], 'An Auld Licht Causerie', *The National Review* (September, 1892), 132-5
29 e.g. [William Robertson Nicoll?], 'The Auld Lichts; their ministers and their kirk. A historical Resume.' reprinted from *Kirriemuir Observer*, *British Weekly* (March 31, 1892), 366
30 'The Journalist in Fiction', *The Church Quarterly Review*, 36 (1893), 73-92, p.73
31 William Wallace, *Academy* (May 26, 1888), 355; *Spectator* (May 5, 1888), 609
32 F. A. McK. 'Mr. J. M. Barrie and "The Little Minister"', *Literary Opinion*, VII (December, 1891), 141

essential fibre of his nature.'[33] Even where critics did recognise that Barrie had set his novels back in time they were adjudged as valuable because of their historical slant:

> The "Auld Licht Idylls" especially depicts a rugged tract of country manners which is rapidly being smoothed away, and its minute delicate realism makes it invaluable to the student of Scottish morals and religion during the middle of the nineteenth century.[34]

Kailyard fiction as a whole was often understood in this context, one which clearly shows the influence on reviewers of Dean Ramsay and what I classified in chapter 1 as the genre of Reminiscences. The *Athenaeum* said of *Auld Licht Idylls*:

> Mr. Barrie and his followers have blown the embers of a dying fire, - the tide has turned and is sweeping away old landmarks. It is at such time that the need of Conservators has arisen, and they have succeeded in rescuing some of the wreckage from the flood; they have reconstructed for new generations the fragments still remaining of bygone days and scenes[35]

Ramsay hovers over contemporary reception of Maclaren also. In one review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne* his name is turned into an adjective, as the death of Jamie Soutar is described as 'Dean Ramsayish.'[36] Both Maclaren and Crockett (repeatedly) were charged with having plagiarised from Ramsay and Maclaren was frequently projected as recording real life in Scotland. He was hailed by the *Academy* as the 'historian' of Drumtochty[37] but here it must be admitted that his own comments on his work indicate that his motives were not primarily those of an artist. He makes it clear that he is attempting to *explain* Scotland, and stresses that the best way to do this is through literature:

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[33] Joseph Ritson, 'The Maker of Modern Idyllism', *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review* (October, 1897), 577-91, p. 579, 581
[34] Moffatt, 'J. M. Barrie and His Books', 21
[35] review of *Margaret Ogilvy*, *Spectator* (January 30, 1897), 175
[36] William Wallace, review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, *Bookman*, IX (December, 1895), 96
[37] review of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, *Academy*, 46 (1894), 419

> it is literature that best explains a country. Scott, for instance, made Scotland ... Then again, much of the modern appreciation of my country is due to Barrie[38]

This attitude accords with what we have noticed about Scottish literature's function in the commercial transmission of a national identity. In the same interview Maclaren goes on to lament the abolition of the old parish school system and takes up a stance which is almost exactly similar to Ramsay's in *Reminiscences of Scottish Life and Character*:

> it will be a sad day for us when we become denationalised. But it is the tendency of the day to dead-level everything ... what we have to contend against most fiercely, what I dread most, is the deadening influence of London ... [which is] crushing out all our national and country life.

Clearly, Ramsay's and all the other Reminiscence volumes we saw swamping the Scottish publishing press in the second half of the century are what Maclaren is seeing as his archetype. In discussion of Kailyard, then, it must be recognised that the potential for these texts to be read and understood within a paradigm of fact was quite large. In a review of one of Crockett's novels, fiction and non-fiction are lumped together without any apparent difficulty. Discussing Crockett's *Red Cap Tales* with *Bonnie Scotland, Painted by Sutton Palmer, Described by A. R. Hope-Moncrieff* and *Scottish Life and Character, Painted by H. J. Dobson, Described by W. Sanderson*, the *Academy* wrote:

> In these three volumes the brush and the pen have united to give us a fine series of pictures of Scottish scenery, home life, and national character and literature. All are inexplicably mingled ... all must be taken in their relation to one another ... Mr. Dobson has some truly charming presentations of simple cottage homes and rustic folk such as we meet with in "A Window in Thrums."[39]

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[38] Raymond Blathwayt, 'A Talk with "Ian Maclaren"', *Great Thoughts*, XXX (January, 1899), 288-90, p.288

[39] *Academy* (December 17, 1904), 610-11

This mingling of fiction and fact was part of the reviewing discourse of the age and it contributed in no small way towards the kind of concerns amongst Scottish intellectuals that I discussed in my introduction.

Along with the genre of Reminiscences, we saw in chapter 1 how the act of collecting and printing songs and oral folklore - widely prevalent in Scotland in the last third of the century - resulted in Scottish poetry being cast within a paradigm of fact, actuality and local history, to the extent that the boundaries between the act of writing imaginative poems and recording historical facts became blurred. Some of Crockett's work in particular fits securely into this paradigm. A book like *Bog-Myrtle and Peat: Tales Chiefly of Galloway Gathered from the years 1889 to 1895* (1895), makes an explicit claim to historical verisimilitude even though it consists entirely of stories in exactly the same vein as Crockett's first publication *The Stickit Minister* (1893). Reviewers of the earlier publication had identified Crockett as following MacDonald and Barrie in '*recording* the peculiar modes of speech and thought' in his 'district.'[40] That he did it within the art of fiction obviously did not weaken the propensity for a factual response to be taken. In 1904 Crockett showed himself prepared to work within that reading-climate when he published *Raiderland: All About Grey Galloway, its Stories, Characters, Humours*, a text which contains both an explicitly factual account of the region and another collection of imaginative stories based on the locality.

On the whole, however, when it came to Scottish authors, the actual 'district' or region in question was quite easily dissolved into 'Scotland'. Whilst Reminiscences and song collections published within Scotland could concentrate on consecrating the region, when it came to fiction published in London, the region became the nation. *The Saturday Review* announced *The Stickit Minister* as 'Scotch stories, racy of the soil, told with a masterly command of dialect and

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[40] *Athenaeum* (May 6, 1893), 572, [italics added]

national characteristics.'[41] Crockett was hailed as having 'a great mastery of the finer and minuter differentiae of Scottish Character'[42] and his career seen as the assembly of a 'gallery ... of disappearing Scottish "types."'[43] Reviews of Maclaren similarly identified him as illustrating declining *national* characteristics. William Wallace wrote in the *Academy* that Posty was 'an admirable example of the old liberty-loving Scot' and Dr. Davidson 'a fine survival of the old Moderate school of Scotch clergy.'[44] Jno. Meldrum Dryerre hailed *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* as 'a glory to Scotland,' declaring the presentation of the Hellfire preaching to be 'a fair sample of what was commonly taught thirty years ago and still is taught in some parts,' and pointing out that the mixing of moralisings and whisky is 'terribly Scotch.'[45] Even where critics recognised Drumtochty to be 'a literary device,' Maclaren was hailed as having given 'the most realistic descriptions we have yet had of farm life in central-Scotland.'[46]

Reviewers were keen to point out where stories coincided with historical facts. Commenting on Crockett's *Raiderland*, the *Academy* wrote:

> the "Diary of an Eighteenth-Century Galloway Laird," which forms the last chapter of the book, is a really important contribution to our knowledge of the social life of Scotland just before the dawn of the nineteenth century.[47]

Barrie, too, was not immune from this sort of commentary. William Wallace considered that *A Window in Thrums* would live beyond *Weir of Hermiston*, William Black and Margaret Oliphant because it was 'a chapter in the history of Scotland; in some two hundred pages it gives an absolutely faithful representation

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41 *The Saturday Review* (April 29, 1893), 469
42 review of *Little Anna Mark*, *Athenaeum* (July 14, 1900), 52
43 review of *Cinderella*, *Bookman*, 20 (July, 1901), 119
44 *Academy* (January, 1896), 54
45 Jno. Meldrum Dryerre, '"Ian Maclaren" (The Rev. John Watson, M.A.)', *Great Thoughts*, XXII (December, 1894), 136-8
46 'Dr. John Watson - "Ian Maclaren"', *McClure's Magazine*, VII (October 1896), 387-400, pp. 389, 396
47 review of *Raiderland*, *Academy* (November 12, 1904), 455

of "Secederism" in the Carlylean sense of religious earnestness.'[48] Such views were uniformly expressed throughout the London periodicals and served to promote Kailyard as a factual account of life in Scotland. Reviewing *Kate Carnegie* in the *British Weekly*, Marcus Dods stated that

> we do not, indeed, know where in literature there is to be found so true a picture of certain features of Scottish life, so graphic a presentation of the bonds which tie rural Scotland to the Church, or so complete a knowledge of the motives and mental movements and habits of a certain class of Scotsmen.[49]

The *Athenaeum* was even more explicit about the value of Maclaren's fiction: 'Dr. Watson's new book should be read by all Southrons who care to become acquainted with the inmost recesses of Scotch character of the better sort.'[50]

The national quality of a piece of work seems to have been a barometer of quality onto which reviewers could fall back when trying to explain its value. It was an easy remark for reviewers to say, as they often did, that Maclaren 'knows his countrymen,'[51] or Crockett 'understands his countrymen'[52] or Maclaren has written 'the real inner spirit and life of rural Scotland.'[53] Fidelity to an alleged Scottish reality often seemed to outmanoeuvre any consideration of literary quality. In a review of *Lads' Love*, William Wallace noted that although Crockett's treatment of love was 'vulgar', it was 'true to Scotland and to Galloway rural life, and that is all that concerns me.'[54] It was critical concerns like these which helped breed in critical circles the already well-tuned emphasis on representation of Scottish reality. As the remainder of this chapter will show, this has had a lasting impact on critical discussions of the fiction of J.M. Barrie.

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48 William Wallace, 'J.M. Barrie', *Bookman*, XIX (November, 1900), 40-4, p. 44
49 *British Weekly* (October 22, 1896)
50 *Athenaeum* (January 2, 1897), 14
51 review of *Rabbi Saunderson*, *Athenaeum* (December 24, 1898), 896
52 review of *The Fire Brand*, *Athenaeum* (December 7, 1901), 770
53 *Speaker*, quoted as advertisment at end of *Kate Carnegie and Those Ministers*, 2nd Edition, (London, 1896)
54 *Bookman*, XII (April, 1897), 11

J.M. BARRIE'S REGIONAL IDENTITY

In the last quarter of the century, literary reviewing was a powerful force which often conspired to assign restrictive generic identities to individual writers or texts. Despite the absence of clear boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, the genre of Kailyard (even before the word was applied) was quick to attain an accepted set of conventions, so much so that Crockett's first publication could be challenged on account of deviating from the demands of the genre: the *Saturday Review* found *The Stickit Minister* stories powerful, but 'almost too powerful for their tiny dimensions,'[55] sentiments which were echoed by the *Bookman*:

> that blow from a poker which falls on a boy's head in "Duncan Duncanson"; that incident with the powder flask in "The Split in the Marrow-Kirk" - do they not savour somewhat too strongly of Mr. Kipling's manner to be perfectly in place among quiet tales of a Scottish parish?[56]

Crockett's generic identity was easily and swiftly set up as a regional novelist aiming to describe life and manners in his chosen locality. By and large his attempts to break out of this mode were treated with disapproval and any return to Galloway sparked remarks of reassurance: 'Mr. Crockett is always readable when he is on familiar ground;'[57] 'he is never quite happy except in Galloway;'[58] 'his foot is once more on his native hearth, and the atmosphere is thick with magnificent Kailyardisms.'[59] That Crockett produced better fiction when he set his stories in Galloway rather than, for example, seventeenth-century Germany, is probably true. With Barrie, the constructing of a generic identity is more important, however, because it has contributed to the relative neglect of his later, more ambitious work. The success of Crockett and Maclaren made it difficult for developments and

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55 *Saturday Review* (April 29, 1893), 469
56 George Douglas, 'The Stickit Minister and Some Common Men', *Bookman*, IV (August, 1893), 146
57 review of *The Banner of Blue*, *Athenaeum* (March 28, 1903), 398
58 review of *Love Idylls*, *Athenaeum* (September 28, 1901), 411
59 review of *The Standard Bearer*, *Spectator* (June 4, 1898), 796

alterations in Barrie's work to be seen from an objective angle. Understanding of his fiction got trapped in the Kailyard.

The success of *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums* thrusted an identity upon Barrie which was to remain central to his reputation until *Peter Pan* and, arguably, even beyond. The publication of *My Lady Nicotine* in 1890 brought concern that 'the photographer of Thrums was forgetting that his 'heart is in Scottish life and character.'[60] 'Mr Barrie's muse has crossed the border,' announced the *Glasgow Herald*, 'we can only hope ... she has not forgotten to provide herself with a return ticket.'[61] It wasn't just that critics suggested Barrie should concentrate on Thrums, they demanded that he should write about it in a certain way. One reviewer wrote of *The Little Minister*:

> Mr. Barrie is greatest among the humbler men and women of Thrums; these people he knows to the very core, while Lord Rintoul is a mere invention.[62]

When *Sentimental Tommy* was published in 1896, the *Catholic World* bemoaned that 'Thrums does not thrive in a London atmosphere,'[63] and the *Times* wrote of the story's sequel that 'Antaeus lifted from earth was not weaker than Mr. Barrie once outside Thrums. The story of Tommy and Grizel in Thrums is the real story, and it is told as only Mr. Barrie can tell it, because it is felt as only he can feel it.'[64] This was what was wanted of Kailyard: an image of Scotland based on an identifiable topographical reality and interpreted to the outsider by one capable of 'feeling' it.

As Peter Widdowson has shown, the same sequence of events occurred with Thomas Hardy: the same early identification of a characteristic line which his

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60 *Spectator* (June 7, 1890), 800-1
61 *Glasgow Herald* (May 1, 1890)
62 W. J. Dawson, 'J. M. Barrie. A Character Sketch', *Young Man*, VI (May, 1892), 157-9, p.159
63 *Catholic World*, 64 (December, 1896), 406
64 'Mr. Barrie's New Novel', *Times* (October 17, 1900), 9

fiction followed, the same attack on the 'improbabilities' of his stories within this line, and the subsequent categorising of 'major' and 'minor' novels according to their adherence to the established convention of a 'Thomas Hardy novel'.[65] It must be noted, however, that Barrie gave his own voice to the argument that Hardy 'loses himself ... every time he wanders beyond Wessex.'[66] Hardy, however, was to remain in Wessex for a long time, whereas a comparatively smaller percentage of Barrie's output is concerned with Thrums. It is significant that Barrie's *Tommy* novels did little to alter opinion as to his generic identity and quite amazing that when full length books began to appear in the 1920s and 30s he was still viewed in the same way. W.A. Darlington wrote of *When a Man's Single* that 'the artistic importance of the book consists in the Thrums chapters,'[67] and James A. Roy considered that '*Tommy and Grizel* loses interest because its setting is no longer Barrie's Thrums, or Margaret Ogilvy's; it is the Thrums of the unsympathetic English visitor.'[68] Remarks like these show critics imposing a generic definition onto a text and consequently giving a negative judgement of the work because it fails to deliver what is desired.

Like others of the time, Barrie was a victim of the publicity machine which constructed a regional image of him. Perhaps the most powerful engines of this machine were the numerous accounts of literary tours which appeared in magazines and periodicals. The earliest of these is a deliberately fictional account by William Robertson Nicoll, the man who played a crucial editorial role in the success of Ian Maclaren and the Kailyard vogue.[69] Writing in the *British Weekly* under his transparent *nom de plume* Claudius Clear, Nicoll told his readers how he took the train to Thrums and met Gavin Ogilvy:

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65 Peter Widdowson, *Hardy in History: A study in literary sociology* (London and New York, 1989)
66 'Thomas Hardy: The Historian of Wessex', *Contemporary Review* (July 1889), 57-66, p. 60
67 W. A. Darlington, *J. M. Barrie* (London and Glasgow, 1938), 45
68 James A. Roy, *James Matthew Barrie: an Appreciation* (London, 1937), 172
69 Nicoll's role will be discussed in full in chapter 5

> I had hardly stepped out of my carriage when I perceived the familiar form of the historian of Thrums descending the Brae ... Mr Gavin Ogilvy has retired from the onerous and responsible positions occupied by him as schoolmaster of Glen Quharity and precentor in the Free Church, and has taken up his abode in Thrums. His house may easily be discovered ... from this he still accurately and extensively surveys the district.[70]

Nicoll concluded his imaginary meeting by stating that 'I have simply to certify the veracity of the chronicler,' and in so doing propagated the idea that the key component in Barrie's work was his faithful rendition of real life in his chosen region. Other tour articles were more explicitly factual. John Geddie wrote and illustrated two articles for *Ludgate* based on tours around Kirriemuir, pointing out the landmarks featured in the fiction and making sweeping assessments of whether Kirriemuir could be considered Highland or Lowland.[71] Most tour articles were quick to point out that, by and large, 'Thrums objects to the greatness thrust upon it'[72] and that the town's view of Barrie was '"not invariably favourable."'[73] Others stressed that Barrie's region was an artistic one and that it 'will disappoint the tourist as severely as the Doone valley continues to disappoint the holiday worshipper of Blackmore.'[74] Illustrative material, however, helped to tighten the identification between author and place: a publication in the American journal *Dial* printed seventy pictures of Thrums accompanied by no literary criticism or comment at all.[75] The sheer number of articles which followed hot on the heels of the emergence of these books indicate that it was possible to accept that the fiction was not factual yet retain a novelty interest in the region for its own sake.[76]

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[70] 'The Correspondence of Claudius Clear - A Visit to Thrums', *British Weekly* (August 2, 1889), 231

[71] John Geddie, 'The Land of Barrie', *Ludgate*, IV (September, 1897), 544-8; 'Thrums', illustrated by John Geddie, *Ludgate*, VI (June 1898), 120-5

[72] Margaretta Byrde, 'Thrums', *Great Thoughts*, XXIX (August, 1898), 325-6, p.325

[73] Rev George Jackson, 'A Visit to Thrums', *Young Man* (Feb, May, 1894), 52-5, 164-7, p.166

[74] A. T. Quiller-Couch, 'J. M. Barrie', *Bookman*, I (February, 1892), 169-71, p.169

[75] 'Thrums', *Dial*, 21 (December 1, 1896), 337.

[76] In addition to those quoted above, see Robert A. Bremner, 'An Afternoon in Thrums', *Scots Magazine* (December, 1894), 16-21; Mary B. Mullett, 'Real Thrums', *Ladies Home Journal*, 17 (May, 1900), 11-12

Margaretta Byrde's article in *Great Thoughts* illustrates this exactly. 'Illusions certainly get dispelled in Thrums', she writes, but the reader of regional fiction was not exclusively concerned with facts:

> if the eyes of the English-speaking race are turned upon Kirriemuir it is not with the expectation of finding it the real Thrums, but the ideal one ... The pen that drew the place and people did not merely transcribe life, it created it ... It is like tearing the pictures from a volume, this loss of the actual. The story often reads the better without them ... the actual is not the real.[77]

The extensive interest in Thrums penetrated historical and geographical accounts of Kirriemuir. In 1900 M. E. Leicester Addis wrote an article on the social history of the town and its surrounds called 'A Harvest Home in Thrums' which approached its subject directly from literature:

> The world of letters knows Thrums well, but comparatively few can identify it with the town of Kirriemuir ... of J.M. Barrie's inimitably realistic pictures of place and people, no one who really knows either could take exception, although on many points he has maintained a seemingly deliberate silence.[78]

In the realm of tourism and local history the name Kirriemuir was relegated from the titles of texts and dissolved into Thrums with apparently little need for explanation. In his *Thrums and its Glens: Historical Relics and Recollections* published in 1896, James Stirton called Thrums 'quite a geographical term' and titled his first chapter 'The Antiquity of Thrums.'[79] As we might expect, this text provides etchings of the Auld Licht Manse, the Dominie's schoolhouse, Barrie's birthplace and others, and takes us on a tour of the town pointing out the locations in the books. Just about everything we learn about the town is either accompanied by a reference to Barrie's fiction or leads from it. A similar publication which appeared in the same year and which was aimed more explicitly at tourists was

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[77] Margaretta Byrde, 'Thrums', 325
[78] M. E. Leicester Addis, 'A Harvest Home in Thrums', *Lippincott's Monthly*, LXVI (October, 1900), 553-8
[79] James Stirton, *Thrums and its Glens: Historical Relics and Recollections* (Kirriemuir, 1896)

Through Thrums: A Handbook for Visitors to Kirriemuir and District. The author of this book, John F. Mills, had written to Barrie enquiring about the location of his stories and had received as a courteous reply 'I sometimes purposely take liberties with localities.'[80] Along with etchings of 'Typical Thrumsians', Mills' text nevertheless provides a fiction-based tour of the town and makes absolutely clear the literary origins of the tourist interest in Kirriemuir:

> By a humour sparkling and spontaneous, a pathos pure and sublime, and an eloquence free and natural, he has invested "the short and simple annals of the poor" of Thrums with an interest fascinating to the world; and transformed a bit of obscure earth into a spot to which pilgrimages are made.[81]

Pilgrimages indeed became commonplace. The American journal *Outlook* recorded that Thrums was visited 'in the summer of 1890 by 3,500 pilgrims,'[82] a statistic which indicates just how quickly Kirriemuir acquired notoriety, given that *The Little Minister* was still to be published at this date.

Given the precedents of Burns and Scott and the parallel interest in Hardy we should not be too surprised at this spectacle of literary tourism. What *is* surprising is the way that the trade advertisements at the back of these tourist and local history books show how easily Thrums had been taken up as an alternative name for the town. Tourists were encouraged to sample the 'Celebrated Rock,' which bore a 'True picture of the "Window in Thrums" and the Residence of Mr. Barrie;' or to visit the Thrums lending library or purchase a pair of Thrums boots with the special "A Window in Thrums" trademark.[83] Inevitably, therefore, stories can be found which attest to Thrums having taken on exactly what Hardy noted of

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[80] unpublished ALS to John F. Mills, London (October 13, 1895), Beinecke Library
[81] John F. Mills, *Through Thrums: A Handbook for Visitors to Kirriemuir and District* (Kirriemuir, 1896), 3
[82] Ellen Painter Cunningham, 'Margaret Ogilvy: A Visit to Mr J.M. Barrie's Mother', *Outlook* (September 26, 1896), 552-4, p. 552
[83] These examples are taken from Mills, *Through Thrums* and *The Thrums Guide Book* (Kirriemuir, n/d)

Wessex. In the preface to the 1895 edition of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Hardy wrote:

> the appellation which I had thought to reserve to the horizons and landscapes of a partly real, partly dream-country, has become more and more popular as a practical provincial definition; and the dream country has, by degrees, solidified into a utilitarian region which people can go to, take a house in, and write to the papers from.[84]

The authentication of the fictional Wessex and the fictional Doone valley - which appeared on Ordnance Survey maps of the region[85] - occurred with Thrums also. One guide book drew attention to the problems caused by tourists not recognising the mid-century setting of Barrie's novels in the Kirriemuir of the 1890s:

> In many cases former local authorities saw fit to substitute high sounding names in place of the homely ones of older generations, and it was difficult to point out to visitors the exact location of many of the scenes written of, but succeeding Town Councils have restored the names in many instances, and strangers have now no difficulty in locating the Tillyloss of "Tam Haggart."[86]

The literary tours in periodicals discussed above were the prelude to such historical and tourist books and also to two book-length studies written over thirty years later. J.A. Hammerton's *Barrieland: A Thrums Pilgrimage* consolidated and strengthened the opinion that Barrie's fiction was best understood in relation to the geography and social history of its setting, and one year later an alternative appeared in the shape of John Kennedy's *Thrums and the Barrie Country*. Both of these texts make use of photographs and maps and provide a kind of anecdotal history of Kirriemuir and the surrounding district as approached through Barrie's fiction and life. Other books on Barrie of the time which were not specifically literary tours also adopted this approach. James A. Roy's book published in 1937, which claimed to be 'the first genuine critical appreciation of [his] work',

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[84] Thomas Hardy, preface to 1895 edition of *Far From the Madding Crowd*, 1874 (London, 1930), vi
[85] Max Keith Sutton, *R. D. Blackmore* (Boston, 1979), 49
[86] *The Thrums Guide Book*, 11

nevertheless opens with a chapter on the history of Kirriemuir.[87] Similarly, Patrick Chalmers' *The Barrie Inspiration*, published one year later clearly locates that inspiration in the region as he gives an extensive account of Kirriemuir's social history and makes much more comment on the fiction than he does the plays.[88] These book-length studies show that despite the fact that since early in the century Barrie had severed his links with fiction almost entirely and become just about the most famous playwright of his age, in the twilight of his career and in the wake of his immediate death in 1937 Kirriemuir and its social history was still seen as indelibly wound up in his literary identity. Considering that the fiction devoted to the Kirriemuir location amounts to such a small percentage of this writer's total output, the sheer amount of published material on it is astonishing.

The assimilation of Barrie's work into the context of regionalism helped create the concept Kailyard because it made central the critical emphasis on authenticity of national picture which I discussed in my introduction. That concept has in turn held a stranglehold over discussion of Barrie's fiction within the context of Scottish literature. It is because his literary-critical identity was forged in the way I have described above that Scottish critics have been keen to castigate his work on the criterion of failed social realism. In the account of his early novels which follows, however, I wish to show that he largely avoids techniques of social realism, and far from passively exploiting the regionalist vogue, works within it according to his own individual fictional interests.

THE COMPILATION OF *AULD LICHT IDYLLS*

It was undoubtedly the taste for regionalism which launched Barrie's journalist career. Kailyard fiction can be said to have originated with the acceptance of an

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87 Roy, *James Matthew Barrie*, quoted on dust wrapper.
88 Patrick Chalmers, *The Barrie Inspiration* (London, 1938)

article entitled 'An Auld Licht Community' which appeared in the *St. James's Gazette* on 17 November 1884. From January 1883 Barrie had been employed as a leader-writer on the *Nottingham Journal*. Notwithstanding the heavy demands placed on him, he continually wrote and sent off articles on a variety of subjects to different newspapers and periodicals. After 'An Auld Licht Community' was accepted Barrie sent Frederick Greenwood, the editor of the *St James's Gazette*, a number of other articles on different themes. Most of these were returned, but on one Greenwood had scribbled 'but I liked that Scotch thing. Any more of those?'[89] Barrie duly complied with a number of articles spaced over the following year. This was the material out of which the bulk of *Auld Licht Idylls*, published in April 1888, was formed.

It would be easy to argue that the Kailyard vogue was thus created by Barrie making a straight-forward concession to audience and editorial demand. The whole question of the relative autonomy of artistic production, however, was an emotive contemporary theme and even becoming a subject for fiction itself, receiving its most impressive treatment in Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891). One of Barrie's main topics of interest in his journalism and early fiction was the commercialisation of literature. His novel *When a Man's Single* (1888), subtitled 'A Tale of Literary Life,' is one of the many works at the time which took a sly, reflexive look at the role of the writer in the market-place, and one passage in particular captures the ethos of life as a newspaper contributor in this era. Rob Angus, a Thrums man, has come to London in search of the 'Literary Life' and has knocked on the door of a newspaper magnate hoping for advice. The passage is an accurate account of what often confronted the budding young writer at this time:

> You beginners seem able to write nothing but your views on politics, and your reflections on art, and your theories of life, which you sometimes even think original. Editors won't have that because their readers don't want it ... Fleet Street at this moment is simply

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[89] J.M. Barrie, *The Greenwood Hat* (London, 1937), 7

> running with men who want to air their views about things in general ... The pity of it is, that all of them could get on to some extent if they would send in what was wanted ... Newspaper readers have an insatiable appetite for knowing how that part of the world lives with which they are not familiar ... There are a thousand articles in Scotland yet. You must know a good deal about the Scottish weavers - well, there are articles in them. Describe the daily life of a gillie: 'The Gillie at Home' is a promising title. Were you ever snowed-up in your saw-mill? Whether you were or not, there is a seasonable subject for January. 'Yule in a Scottish village' also sounds well and there is a safe article in a Highland gathering (135-6).

There is some explicit autobiographical content here because Barrie himself wrote such articles on a Highland Gathering and a snowed-up schoolhouse. The success of his career - and, indeed, that of H.G. Wells, who claimed to have been inspired by reading this very passage[90] - seemed to turn precisely on 'sending in what was wanted.' Frederick Greenwood's taste for 'that Scotch thing' certainly initiated the Kailyard vogue and in his early career at least, Barrie was quite happy to supply articles. Within the space of almost a year he had contributed nine pieces on the Auld Licht theme to the *St James's Gazette* and five to *Home Chimes*. Denis Mackail has written that after the publication of 'The Auld Licht in Arms' in early March, 'there was a break in this kind of output for more than two years. He shook off Scotland when he plunged into London [on 28 March 1885].'[91] This is not quite accurate, there were a few more pieces published after March, but the point remains pertinent. After the publication of "An Auld Licht Minister' in *Home Chimes* on 19 September 1885, Barrie really did abandon the Auld Licht theme. It seems likely that at this stage he felt his writing future lay elsewhere and the number of articles which he was publishing on bachelorhood and smoking - pieces which would eventually form the basis of *My Lady Nicotine* (1891) - increased considerably.

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[90] Anthony West, *Aspects of a Life* (London, 1984), 208
[91] Denis Mackail, *The Story of J.M.B.* (London, 1948), 98-9

In 1887 another influential editor enters the picture. William Robertson Nicoll was undoubtedly the main mediator of the Kailyard vogue. It was he who encouraged Barrie to revive the Auld Licht articles and make a book out of them. *Auld Licht Idylls* was duly published in 1888 and it is often thought that Barrie only made slight changes when confronted with the task of transforming his material from journalist sketches into book-form.[92] But a letter written in January 1888 proves this not to be the case. Barrie wrote to T.L. Gilmour saying 'I am devoting all my spare time ... to the Auld Licht papers, two thirds of which require rewriting.'[93] It is certainly true that *Auld Licht Idylls* has a diffuse quality which bears its generic ancestry visibly, but the transition from article to book was not a neutral process and the differences between the two are in some cases quite substantial. The numerous cosmetic changes, and the tinkerings with syntax and language eventually made, show that unlike Ian Maclaren, who generally just reprinted his material when it was transferred from article to book, Barrie was meticulous in his attention to expressive detail. More significantly, however, he altered the style and narrative stance of his newspaper articles, taking them away from a factual idiom towards a more artful, fictional presentation of an imaginary community.

Chapter 1 of *Auld Licht Idylls*, 'The Schoolhouse', where the narrator-dominie introduces himself, was the fourth Auld Licht article to appear in the *St James's Gazette*, published on January 28, 1885 under the title 'From a Snowed-Up Schoolhouse.' It is one of the many articles by Barrie missing from Henry Garland's incomplete, and in some cases inaccurate, 1928 bibliography.[94] It serves as a good example of how there is a greater sense in the newspaper articles of

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92 see, for example, Harry M. Geduld, who argues 'there was no refashioning of the book as a whole.' *Sir James Barrie* (New York), 18

93 unpublished ALS to [T.L.] Gilmour, Kirriemuir (January 4, 1888), Beinecke

94 Herbert Garland, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Sir James Matthew Barrie* (London, 1928). Garland does not list the ten articles Barrie contributed to *Home Chimes* in 1884 and 1885, although he does list the six articles contributed in 1886 and 1887

Barrie pandering to audience expectation of life in Scotland. The first sentence of the newspaper version, for example, reads: 'Early this morning I opened a window in my Highland schoolhouse;' but in book-form Barrie omitted the word 'Highland,' and at the end of the sketch he made another telling piece of editing: in the newspaper version, the dominie closes his account with a line not included in the book: 'Great Bens fade into the sky to the north, or only the gloaming would prevent me looking down on wooded Balmoral.'[95]

Such cliche-ridden resorts to audience anticipation are largely absent from the book version and as a result the identity and status of the dominie becomes more complicated. In *Auld Licht Idylls* (and even more so in *A Window in Thrums*), Barrie deliberately makes the narrator both insider and outsider. He alternates between 'we' and 'they' when describing the community's characteristics and although he is there to point out their trivialities he also defends their profundities. This 'contradictory role', as Cairns Craig has described it,[96] is what keeps Barrie's satire in check and prevents it becoming cheap, patronising and voyeuristic (as S.R. Crockett's omniscient narrative stance is in *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, for example). In the original articles, however, Barrie's narrator emerges as a definite outsider, new to Scotland, reporting on the characteristics of an alien land:

> Scotland had not been long known to me before I reached the conclusion that the scene of back-bent poverty-laden natives of the smaller towns, whose last years are a struggle with the workhouse, almost invariably constitute an Auld Licht congregation, of which a very young man is the minister.

This passage from 'An Auld Licht Community' did not find its way into the book and nor did remarks like this: 'the discreet man who sojourns in Scotland does on

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95 'From a Snowed-Up Schoolhouse', *St James's Gazette* (January 28, 1885)
96 Cairns Craig, 'Fearful Selves: Character, Community and the Scottish Imagination, *Cencrastus*, 4 (Winter 1980-1), 29-32, p.30

Sunday as Scotchmen do, without asking questions.'[97] In fact the word 'Scotland' is hardly mentioned in *Auld Licht Idylls* and this is because of Barrie's decision to use his recently invented idea of 'Thrums' as an organising principle for the book.

'Thrums' is mentioned in only one of the newspaper articles from which *Auld Licht Idylls* derives - the final one he wrote before publishing the book. Elsewhere, whenever Barrie names his village (which is not always) it is usually 'Wheens', and on other occasions the narrator will talk simply about 'Scotland'. The fictional village 'Thrums' is outlined in chapter 2 of *Auld Licht Idylls*, which is by far the longest chapter in the book and also the one which received most alteration and addition; indeed only a small amount of it can be traced to previous articles. The beginning of the chapter, which gives a physical description of Thrums, actually incorporates much of the vocabulary Barrie had used to describe Thrums in the serialised version of *When a Man's Single*, which ran in the *British Weekly* from October 7, 1887 to March 16, 1888. When he came to publish *When a Man's Single* in novel form, Barrie omitted all the descriptions that he had by now lifted from the serialised version into *Auld Licht Idylls* just a few months before. These additions meant that in *Auld Licht Idylls*, in contrast to the factual idiom of the newspaper articles, the fictionality of the picture is stressed. Although the narrator is precise in his description of the town, he nevertheless draws attention to his own act of describing: 'Thrums is the name I give here to the handful of houses jumbled together in a cup' (9). What follows in chapter 2 is substantially new with the exception of a few ideas, recast in sharper prose, taken from 'An Auld Licht Community.' When compiling the book Barrie thus created a substantial amount of new material to broaden his account of the village and its customs and at the same time drew greater attention to the way the dominie identifies himself as storyteller.

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97 'An Auld Licht Community', *St James's Gazette* (November 17, 1884)

Barrie also departed from a conspicuously journalistic style when he moved from newspaper to book. Chapter 5, 'The Auld Licht in Arms,' is compiled from two *St James's Gazette* articles: 'The Auld Licht in Arms,' published on March 12, 1885, and 'The Battle of Cabbylatch,' which appeared on May 25, 1885. The former is reprinted with only minor alterations on pages 107-115 of *Auld Licht Idylls*; interestingly, though, the town in this article is called neither 'Thrums' nor 'Wheens', but 'Croup.' The May article, however, underwent much revision. Two paragraphs at the beginning of the piece were omitted when the book was compiled and both had served to place the story in a more factually precise time and space than is offered by the book. The piece begins:

> The times are bad, trade is much depressed, there are far too many idle hands in the community, and a vast deal of poverty and distress. But we ought not to forget that in days not very far distant the lot of the poor was much harder than it is now. The story of the fight at Cabbylatch illustrates a state of things very prevalent a few scores years ago.[98]

The insistence on realism and topicality gives this paragraph an unmistakable air of historical reporting. We are going to hear a story but it is being framed within a paradigm of historical fact. In *Auld Licht Idylls* the rigidity of that paradigm is loosened. It is clear that the picture of the Thrums community is set in the past but it is never a precisely located past. Similarly, Thrums and its surroundings are unmistakably Kirriemuir and Forfarshire, but the geography is never explicitly set out. By contrast, the newspaper article continues with a paragraph which locates the story in a geographical framework which is designed to appeal to the reader's factual knowledge of Scotland:

> The tourist seeking to reach Balmoral from the south by the shortest and most difficult known route would leave the train at Forfar or Glamis and continue his journey on foot or on horseback. In either case he would have to traverse the memorable field of Cabbylatch - a low lying plot in the valley of Strathmore.

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98 'The Battle of Cabbylatch', *St James's Gazette* (May 25, 1885)

The framework of the story is being deliberately set up within a range of references which the London-based newspaper readers could empathise with and register as realistic on terms of their armchair understanding of Scotland. Not only is this kind of grabbing of audience attention absent from the book version but the journalist stance is removed also. Whereas in the book Barrie was to create a partly idealised fictional place as a kind of dream-world, in the article he adopts a tone of factual reporting about a supposedly *real* Scotland: 'As in Ireland the product of the potato-field is the chief source of subsistence, so in the country districts of the north the poor lived from week's end to week's end on the coarsest meal.' 'The Battle of Cabbylatch' was partly based on the Kirriemuir Chartist riots of 1839 and the essential story remains the same in the two versions. By merging it with the earlier article, however, and removing the suggestions that this is a historical and factual account, Barrie alters the perspective of his piece and makes it fit more into the background of the imaginary community he has been building up rather than Scottish farm-life in the 1830s.

The alterations made between article and book show that Barrie was not predominantly concerned with describing Scottish society. In the newspaper articles Scottish national peculiarities are described for easy consumption by outsiders through the medium of a narrator who is uncomplicatedly one of their own. In the book, however, Barrie moved away from the journalistic idiom towards a greater concentration on the creation of an imaginative place and community that, whilst demonstrably in Scotland, is not claiming to stand *for* Scotland. The changes show that he was keen to avoid the trap of simply pandering to audience expectations of regional fiction, and in *Auld Licht Idylls* we can see him oscillating between two genres. The semi-realistic treatment of social life in Scotland which was designed to placate the readers of London newspapers undoubtedly remains manifest in the novel, but the changing role of the narrator indicates a shifting of emphasis away from commenting objectively on external

reality towards a concern with arousing his readers into adopting a specific *emotional* response to the text. Criticism of Barrie's early novels (and of Kailyard fiction in general) proceeds from the idea that the author has failed to offer successful treatment of social change and social reality. Thomas Knowles, for example, is absolutely right to say that Barrie exploits the phenomenon of the exiled Scot 'largely as an opportunity for sentiment, thereby avoiding a more penetrating account of the conflict of life styles and values involved in migration and social change.'[99] But the evaluative judgement is dependent upon the idea that analysis of social change is artistically superior to inducing sentiment. As I will go on to show in the following chapter, this kind of criticism is guilty of imposing a twentieth-century critical model on a nineteenth-century text. In the remainder of this chapter I want briefly to show that even if you do approach Barrie's early work from this direction there *are* elements of careful and revealing social criticism, but ultimately I want to argue that such a critical approach is inappropriate to the rhetorical strategies of these texts and unhelpful in charting the formal qualities and concerns Barrie was exhibiting in them.

Eric Anderson has remarked that '*Auld Licht Idylls* is a series of vignettes illustrative of social change,'[100] and the presentation of a real Scotland in transition is indeed one of the main features of this text. It is made absolutely clear that the community being described is not a contemporary one: 'a Railway line runs into Thrums now' and the handloom weavers, though they remain, are gradually dying out because 'there are two new factories in the town' (11). In the chapter 'Davit Lunan's Political Reminiscences' there is an explicit reference to the Reform Bill of 1832, but for the most part the exact time scheme is left vague. As discussed above, the book includes a chapter based on the social effects of a Chartist riot.

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[99] K, 119

[100] Eric Anderson, 'The Kailyard Revisited', in *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction: Critical Essays*, ed. Ian Campbell (Manchester, 1979), 130-47, p. 132.

Although the principal rhetorical strategy is one of humour, there is an undercurrent of political reality. The piece ends with a paragraph which oscillates between the comic and the serious:

> Some ugly cuts were given and received, and heads as well as ribs were broken; but the townsmen's triumph was short-lived. The ring-leaders were whipped through the streets of Perth, as a warning to persons thinking of taking the law into their own hands; and all the lasting consolation they got was that, some time afterwards, the chief witness against them, the parish minister, met with a mysterious death. They said it was evidently the hand of God; but some people looked suspiciously at them when they said it. (121)

There is nothing pastoral about Barrie's treatment of the weaving community. The narrator details how machinery has changed the bothy system and reduced the close contact between the labourers who in the past were used to living in groups of fifty 'in the farm out-houses on beds of straw' (46). The past is not afforded uncritical nostalgic approval nor exploited for sentimental effect. The fading lifestyle of the bothy labourers is instead projected as one of harsh struggle. The narrator makes the comparative comment that '"Hands" are not huddled together nowadays in squalid barns more like cattle than men and women' (45). Such details of social change run throughout *Auld Licht Idylls* where they are allied to the overt rhetoric of humour. As yet there is very little of the sentimental Barrie so renounced by critical opinion; even the account of a funeral is exploited for humour rather than sentiment.

In the long chapter called 'Thrums' in particular, Barrie's account of the town allows the text to explore some of the implications of social change. The account of the old post office, for example, draws attention to the way the simple innovation of the pillar box changed the way the community interacted. 'At the time I write of,' the narrator comments, 'the posting of the letter took as long and was as serious an undertaking as the writing' (24):

> To post a letter you did not merely saunter to the post-office and drop it into the box. The captious correspondent first went into the shop and explained to Lizzie how matters stood (26).

The cantankerous post-mistress is a centre for village gossip as she steams opens the letters and keeps tabs on each village member's business and correspondence. Again the principal effect is humour, but there is an under-stated comparison between modern-day codes of privacy and past ways of community interaction; a comparison where Barrie carefully balances the claims of both past and present.

The overall impression of *Auld Licht Idylls* is of a text oscillating between being a social document and a nostalgic, but at this stage overtly humorous, lament for a way of life. Unlike the newspaper articles where Scotland is used somewhat as an end in itself, the book uses a picture of a Scottish village as a means to a greater end - the attempt to say something rather more universal about 'the glamour of twilight' as Robert Louis Stevenson was to call it in a letter to him.[101] By reducing the precise spatial and temporal references and by complicating the narrator's relationship with the community, Barrie shows himself to be less intent on providing a factual vision of life in Scotland than on encouraging his readers to react to what has been constructed as the central literary idea: nostalgia. This was a technique which was to be deployed more fully and explicitly in his next work where humour was to be allied to pathos.

A WINDOW IN THRUMS AND THE VICTORIAN IDYLL

Nostalgia was to be taken to the forefront of Barrie's literary idea with the publication of *A Window in Thrums*. The manuscript for this text, held in the Beinecke Library, consists of twenty two chapters, half of which are in Barrie's

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101 *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven and London, 1995), Vol. VII, 447

handwriting and the other half partly in handwriting and partly composed of clippings from newspaper articles with heavy correction, revision and addition. Of the eleven handwritten chapters, two were later published in magazines after Barrie had shaped them for the book. The novel was thus substantially composed from original material and, more importantly, planned as a novel from the outset. Of the twelve chapters which do derive from previously published work, only four are based on the *St James's Gazette* articles published in the period 1884-5.

*A Window in Thrum*s stands as an example of the Victorian genre of idyllic fiction. I showed in my introduction how Scottish literary critics have seen the nineteenth century in England as the era of social realism and industrial fiction, and subsequently pronounced Scottish literature as inferior. Recent criticism of English literature has attempted to break out of this narrow conception of the Victorian novel by considering the whole range of genres and subgenres being extensively deployed. One of the most significant to have been under-represented is the genre of idyllic fiction. Shelagh Hunter considers that the dominance of Leavisite-based criticism has relegated the pastoral idyll from its rightful place as a leading genre in mid and late nineteenth-century fiction.[102] Her study is an important attempt to rescue and identify one of the most important fictional genres of the nineteenth century and reveals a more appropriate context than social realism within which to understand Barrie's early work.

Writing in 1897, Joseph Ritson cast Barrie as 'The Maker of Modern Idyllism:'

> Marshall Mather is doing for Lancashire, and Jane Barlow for some parts of Ireland, what Mr. Barrie has done for Thrums, Mr. Crockett for Galloway, and Ian Maclaren for Drumtochty.[103]

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[102] Shelagh Hunter, *Victorian Idyllic Fiction: Pastoral Strategies* (London and Basingstoke, 1984), 2

[103] Ritson, 'The Maker of Modern Idyllism', 577

As well as suggesting that idyllism as a genre has been propelled into a renaissance by Barrie, Ritson's use of the term here is inextricably tied up with regionalism, and in the Victorian period idyllic fiction was closely associated with rural life. A number of contemporary reviews of Kailyard fiction drew parallels with Dutch painting which was used as a touchstone of realism. As one critic remarked of *A Window in Thrums*:

> The work is wrought with the finish, the precision, and the truth of excellent Dutch painting; but its execution is surpassed by a higher spiritual quality, a sympathetic reverence for all forms of faith and goodness, which pervades the book like a fragrance[104]

The pictorial quality of Barrie's work in particular places it alongside the idyllic fiction discussed by Hunter, who argues that 'a particular kind of interplay between picture and narrative is ... a defining characteristic of the Victorian idyll':

> Picture and story are, it seems, inseparable in the nineteenth-century depiction of the "characters, manners and sentiments" of simple people in a rural natural setting.[105]

Thomas Hardy's use of 'A Rural Painting of the Dutch School' as a subtitle for *Under the Greenwood Tree* and George Eliot's famous defence of the cultural value of Dutch painting in chapter 17 of *Adam Bede* bear testament to the importance which the genre acquired and of how it was identified as an integral component of fictional technique. Regional fiction, especially that which dealt with rural communities, was linked with a pictorial technique, and one obvious effect of this was the necessary suspension of narrative in order to achieve a stasis from which a picture of what Hunter calls 'idyllic balance' could be viewed:

> The idyllic novel must seek ways to halt progress in order to show permanent or potential relationships from a static point of view ... the static condition of a picture in which all the relationships can be seen at once.[106]

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104 'The Journalist in Fiction', *The Church Quarterly Review*, 75
105 Hunter, *Victorian Pastoral Fiction*, 32, 49
106 ibid. 48-9

This is an important point because it shows that one particular branch of Regional fiction was not characterised by a treatment of social change. Change is a key component of the critical rejection of Kailyard. Whilst it has been pointed out that some Kailyard fiction does not completely ignore the presence of change,[107] one of the main lines of argument pursued by Ian Campbell in his book is that change is always in the background, whilst George Douglas Brown brings it mercilessly to the foreground in *The House with the Green Shutters*.[108] Unfortunately, one of the main problems with Campbell's study is that having set up treatment of social change as a qualitative value, he does not make any categorical judgements on individual writers. It is not clear how far he attacks Barrie's fiction on this point. A later article, however, where Campbell gives more weight to critical analysis than he does in his book, makes things more explicit. Campbell argues that 'unlike parts of Crockett's kailyard Scotland, Barrie's is not content to stand on a preservationist platform and watch the nineteenth century go by.'[109] As I have discussed above, this seems a fair assessment, but there is still room for some adjustment in the critical approach. Treatment of social change may not be the most appropriate, or historically valid, way of looking at this genre. Instead, by analysing Kailyard texts within the context of idyllic fiction we can see how the presentation of stasis is a necessary component of the fictional design.

Kailyard texts are characterised by the presentation of a largely secluded world and a largely static framework. The typical Kailyard narrator often makes clear that he is speaking of the past from the vantage point of the present but that past is never located exactly within real time. The historical material and time-scheme of Crockett's *The Lilac Sunbonnet*, for example, do not stand up to

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[107] e.g. Ian Carter: 'Kailyard: The Literature of Decline in Nineteenth Century Scotland', *The Scottish Journal of Sociology*, 1:1 (1976), 1-13

[108] C, 91-2.

[109] Ian Campbell, 'The Scottish Short Story: Three Practitioners', *Journal of the Short Story in English*, 10 (1988), 17-44, p.24

chronological analysis.[110] Locating the story in historical time is not, however, the technique of idyllic fiction; instead there is what Hunter calls the 'play of the timeless against the here and now.'[111] The past is not given any clear historical boundaries but suspended in a timeless world - hence the often pointed out Edenic appearance. Maclaren's Drumtochty in particular is presented as a deliberately secluded space: 'The railway did not think it worthwhile to come to Drumtochty, and we were cut off from the lowlands by miles of forest, so our manners retained the fashion of the former age' (BBBB, 133). Drumtochty is not impervious to the world outside, but the narrator makes it clear that what he is showing us is in the past and divorced from modern improvements. Though there are considerable rhetorical differences, Maclaren's secluded world is thus no different from the secluded world of Hardy's early novels - *Far from the Madding Crowd*, for example - which likewise bear no hint of the railways even though they were set in a period when, historically speaking, the railways were there. In *Tess* and *Jude* the railways are present and serve as an important vehicle for Hardy's presentation of the changes wrought on everyday rural life by technological improvement. In the earlier novels, however, the absence of them exacerbates the deliberate timeless framework required to meet Hardy's employment of the idyllic genre. Maclaren's fiction can thus be said to belong to a literary genre, central to Victorian fiction, for which a static presentation of the community in a timeless framework was the driving aim and for which the presentation of social evolution - such as we find in *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk*, for example, was irrelevant. These concerns can be explored in more detail with reference to Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, a text which is consistently in line with the idyllic tradition.

Change is pointed out on the very first page:

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110 Donaldson, *The Life and Work of Samuel Rutherford Crockett*, 94
111 Hunter, *Victorian Idyllic Fiction*, 5

> In the old days a stiff ascent left Thrums behind, and where is now the making of a suburb was only a poor row of dwellings and a manse, with Hendry's cot to watch the brae. (1)

All that we need to know is that the picture of the old days which we are going to see is past. Barrie's narrator goes on to describe in close detail what the picture would have looked like in the past:

> The house stood bare, without a shrub, in a garden whose paling did not go all the way round, the potato pit being only kept out of the road, that here sets off southward, by a broken dyke of stones and earth. On each side of the slate-coloured door was a window of knotted glass. Ropes were flung over the thatch to keep the roof on in wind. (1)

Such detail is pictorial in technique and Barrie's style is similar to many passages in *Adam Bede*, for instance the opening of chapter 4:

> A green valley with a brook running through it, full almost to overflowing with the late rains; overhung by low stooping willows. Across this brook a plank is thrown, and over this plank Adam Bede is passing with his undoubting step... [112]

The prose here reads almost like stage directions, demanding its readers to paint a static picture for themselves. *Adam Bede* could be said to be the archetypal work of idyllic fiction and like *A Window in Thrums* it is explicit about its own fictionality. The famous interlude, chapter 17, 'In Which the Story Pauses a Little', has already been anticipated by way the novel begins:

> With a single drop of ink for a mirror, the Egyptian sorcerer undertakes to reveal to any chance comer far-reaching visions of the past. This is what I undertake to do for you, reader. With this drop of ink at the end of my pen I will show you the roomy workshop of Mr Jonathan Burge, carpenter and builder in the village of Hayslope, as it appeared on the eighteenth of June, in the year of our Lord 1799.[113]

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[112] George Eliot, *Adam Bede*, 1859, ed. Stephen Gill (Harmondsworth, 1980), 83
[113] *Adam Bede*, 49

Hunter stresses that 'the idyllic is conscious of and explicit about its own artistry, and makes its statements frequently by drawing attention to the presentation.'[114] The narrator in *A Window in Thrums* differs from that of *Adam Bede* in that he is a character in the novel, but he performs the same immediate function in drawing attention to the fictionality of the picture. He is trying to paint a picture which no longer exists, and he has an important role to play in trying to get his readers to cast off their social trimmings and see the picture in a certain way:

> Into this humble abode I would take any one who cares to accompany me. But you must not come in a contemptuous mood, thinking that the poor are but a stage removed from beasts of burden, as some cruel writers of these days say (1-2)

As well as offering a clear attack on naturalist writing, this passage contains a rejection of the Arnoldian denigration of the provincial, as the narrator demands a balanced, non-condescending viewing of the picture. As the first chapter of *A Window in Thrums* continues, the narrator universalises the particular, interpellating the reader into a picture which attains symbolic resonance:

> We have all found the brae long and steep in the spring of life. Do you remember how the child you once were sat at the foot of it and wondered if a new world began at the top? It climbs from a shallow burn, and we used to sit on the brig a long time before venturing to climb. As boys we ran up the brae. As men and women, young and in our prime, we almost forgot that it was there. But the autumn of life comes and the brae grows steeper; then the winter, and once again we are as the child pausing apprehensively on the brig. Yet we are no longer the child; we look now for no new world at the top, only for a little garden and a tiny house, and a handloom in the house. It is only a garden of kail and potatoes, but there may be a line of daisies, white and red, on each side of the narrow footpath, and honeysuckle over the door. Life is not always hard, even after backs grow bent, and we know that all braes lead only to the grave. (4-5)

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[114] Hunter, *Victorian Idyllic Fiction*, 40

This is being written by a twenty-eight year-old man adopting the persona of one who is at the end of his life, conscious of things having past and decayed, and of the world being in such a state of transition that the mind is forced to look back into the past to pick up the remembered objects which evoke emotion. It is within this framework of directing the reader to look back that the narrator will tell the story of Jess and her family, and the last section of the above quote concentrates on encouraging the reader to paint the picture; on what the mind should look for. The picture of rural life which is to follow, then, is explicitly idyllic and fictional and supposed to stand for something more general. When the narrator says 'Not every one returns who takes the elbow of the brae bravely, or waves his handkerchief to those who watch from the window with wet eyes, and some return too late' (10), he is not trying to tell us what is peculiar to the real-life historical events of a town in Forfarshire. The rhetorical strategy is one of inducing emotion in the reader rather than depicting external reality. It is this distinction in artistic strategy which must be accommodated if we are to truly appreciate Barrie's early work and understand how it was received by contemporary audiences.

A Window in Thrums marks the beginning of the rejection of whatever interest Barrie had shown in *Auld Licht Idylls* with reproducing social reality. Its opening chapter is similar to chapter 17 of *Adam Bede* in the way the narrator demands a particular kind of reader-response to the story which follows. In idyllic fiction, Hunter argues that 'the reader is meant to respond with a suspension of completed judgement and a recognition of potentially conflicting emotion.'[115] The narrator's role is crucial to the creation of this effect:

> he speaks in all of them as a sophisticated observer of a simpler life; as one who understands, if he does not share, the assumed views of an assumed reader, and at the same time as one who understands but *cannot* share the life he depicts ... he lays no claim to omniscience, but he does lay claim, implicitly, to being in

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[115] ibid. 48

> possession of a vantage-point from which comparisons can be made[116]

In *A Window in Thrums* the narrator operates in precisely this way. I have already mentioned that he presents himself as both insider and outsider; he balances himself between engagement with the sentiments of the people he is describing and a refusal to allow the reader to get too close to them. He is always present in the story that he is 'trying to bring back' (3) from his memory but hardly ever involved in its action, always slipping in before the door swings to or retiring to the attic when the McQumphas are having an intimate, family moment:

> suddenly Jamie cried out, "My mother!" and Leeby and I were left behind. When I reached the kitchen Jess was crying, and her son's arms were round her neck. I went away to my attic. (159-60)

It is precisely through this distance that Barrie protects his characters from voyeurism and prevents us from adopting a position of cynicism towards their sentiments. The narrator's role is one of mediation, and he makes a point of saying that whilst 'to those who dwell in great cities Thrums is only a small place', to him, cut off in his lonely schoolhouse, it contains 'a clatter of life.' (6) His mediating role defends the right for Thrums to contain 'life', for the brae to have the 'history of tragic little Thrums ... sunk into it.' (4) That almost oxymoronic coupling of 'tragic' and 'little' vindicates the right for Thrums to contain tragedy and profundity however small and remote a place it might be. The strategy is similar to that of Hardy who at the beginning of *The Woodlanders* anticipates the 'dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean' that will take place in the sleepy 'sequestered spots' of Little Hintock.[117] Both writers are reflexively aware of audience taste and incorporate an explicit defence of the provincial inside the rhetoric of the text.

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[116] ibid. 56-7
[117] Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, 1887, ed. David Lodge (Basingstoke, 1974), 38

One of the effects of this rhetorical strategy of inducing emotion through the mediating role of the narrator, is that Barrie represents *inside the novel* the dilemma of the writer of fiction: the difficulty of creating an illusion of reality in which his readers will believe. At this stage of his career, Barrie uses his narrator to try and convince the reader of the realism and veracity of the story of Jess and her family and the emotions involved in it. As his fictional career progressed, however, he came to be more and more interested in the role of the narrator and in the act of creating illusions of reality. As I will show in chapter 4, his later novels are characterised by an intense interest in the creative mind; with storytelling and illusory realities. Whereas in *The Little Minister* he was to present a narrator who continually drew attention to himself as a writer, in *A Window in Thrums* the narrator is still self-conscious but less explicit about the act of writing:

> Away up in the glen, my lonely schoolhouse lying deep, as one might say, in a sea of snow, I had many hours in the years long by for thinking of my friends in Thrums and mapping out the future of Leeby and Jamie. I saw Hendry and Jess taken to the churchyard and Leeby left alone in the house. I saw Jamie fulfil his promise to his mother, and take Leeby, that stainless young woman far away to London, where they had a home together. Ah! but these were only the idle dreams of a Dominie. (176)

This passage is in-keeping with the use of prolepsis in the text and serves to dramatise inside the novel the act of wish-fulfilment - the desire for the happy ending which will not come. But whereas a comparable passage in *The Little White Bird* would be used as a starting point for a metafictional analysis of the narrator's desire for illusory consolation, here the concerns of the narrator remain subordinate to the story of Jess itself. Though we can detect the roots of what I will show in chapter 4 to be Barrie's proto-modernist, metafictional concern with the construction of fictional reality, at this stage in his career it is a secondary issue and the novel proceeds to relate the story of Jamie's failure to return home before his family die.

Unfortunately, because of the implicit criteria contained within the critical concept Kailyard, assessment of Barrie's fiction has focused too heavily (almost exclusively) on the way it *represents* a Scottish reality. J.B. Caird, for instance, complains of Barrie's suppression of 'the *authentic* voice of the north-east' in favour of 'that unreal caricature of a community he calls Thrums.'[118] Caricature is, I think, an overstatement, but the chief problem with Caird's comment is its implicit rejection of fiction itself. The problem is that it is assumed that Barrie is *trying* to depict Scottish reality. Andrew Noble, for example, comments that the appearance of George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* 'gave the lie to Barrie's vision.'[119] But I don't think Barrie had a vision of Scotland, whereas I do think he had a vision of fiction. It is this vision which I intend to treat closely in chapter 4, because the inappropriate focus on the way Barrie's work represents Scotland is of less importance to *A Window in Thrums* (which I would not claim to be anything other than an interesting second-rate work) than it is to Barrie's unjustly neglected longer and later novels. The reason for this neglect is that with the exception of *The Little Minister* - which is, indeed, often seen as the apotheosis of the Kailyard - none of these works fit into the Kailyard paradigm with its inbuilt emphasis on representation. In chapter 4, I offer a thorough re-reading of these novels showing how each grew out of Barrie's changing perspectives on realism. Before that, however, there follows a chapter devoted to realism itself, because it has been the failure to understand the word 'realism' historically which has led to the misrepresentation of Maclaren's and Barrie's early work. The Kailyard term encourages a critical approach which concentrates solely on the depiction of social reality. As I will show, however, this is an inappropriate way to try and understand why these texts appealed to contemporary readers, who were able to understand them as realistic on a number of levels.

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[118] J.B. Caird, 'A Scotsman on the make: A note on Barrie's Novels', *Brunton's Miscellany*, 1:1 (1977), 25-7, p.27 [italics added]

[119] Andrew Noble, introduction to *Edwin Muir: Uncollected Scottish Criticism* (New York and London, 1982), 34 [italics added]

III

KAILYARD AND REALISM: THE APPEAL OF BARRIE AND MACLAREN

> It is a far cry from the demure and prim manners of Mrs. Gaskell's ladies to the rough vigour of Thrums.[1]

My introduction argued that realism was the key issue behind the employment of the term Kailyard in critical discourse. The subsequent construction of the term as a defining device in the study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Scottish culture (literary and non-literary) proceeds from the assumption that the fiction associated with the term is unrealistic. In the preceding chapter, I showed how the regional vogue exacerbated this concern with realism amongst Scottish critics because it created the potential for the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren to be seen by outsiders as imparting a documentary account of life in Scotland. These anxieties over the way Scotland is being represented in fiction have meant that the actual relationship between Kailyard fiction and Victorian ideas of realism has been obscured. Given that so much of the attack on Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren leads from their alleged distortion of reality, it is supremely ironic that the one word which keeps recurring in contemporary reviews is 'realism'. In this chapter I will show that Victorian readers and critics were capable of understanding 'realism' on a number of levels. As well as being seen as factually accurate in its depiction of Scottish reality, the fiction of Barrie and Maclaren could be seen as realistic in a different way. Once again, we must look beyond the assumptions produced by the Kailyard term in order to see how Maclaren's work in particular appealed to an established aesthetic of realism that was descended from mid-century ideas of sympathy and the sentimental.

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[1] Moffatt, 'J. M. Barrie and His Books', 21

The Kailyard term has misrepresented the 'realism' of Barrie and Maclaren because it assumes an ahistorical meaning for the word. In the 1890s realism was a highly contested term. Thomas Knowles has discussed Kailyard as a commercial and ideological phenomenon designed to promote a moral ethos and act as 'a bastion against the ungodly aspects of literature in the nineties.'[2] He argues that Barrie and Maclaren retreated from realism ostensibly on moral grounds:

> the choice of the rural alternative was a retreat, not only from the most typical and central social environment of the time, but also from a reality charged with images both powerful and threatening, conflicting and chaotic...[3]

To identify these authors as anti-realists, however, is to ignore the incontestable fact that in contemporary reviews they were not seen as 'alternatives' to realism, as Knowles suggests, but as embodying a specific kind of realism:

> what Mr. Barrie lacks in comprehensiveness of survey, he makes up in realism of portraiture. Happily, there is more of Teniers than of Zola in his realism; more happily still, there is more of Wilkie than of Teniers. (1889)[4]

> he [Maclaren] has set himself deliberately to lay bare the recesses of simple Scottish tenderness and love, to oppose these realities to the so-called realism of the Rougon-Macquart horrors. (1895)[5]

> His [Crockett's] sketches are powerfully realistic - not in the degenerate acceptation of that term - but realistic in their homely truthfulness. (1894)[6]

Remarks like these indicate how ambivalent the word 'realist' could be in this era. In reviews, Barrie and Maclaren were often mapped out as worthy alternatives to naturalist fiction, which through the writings of Zola had acquired theoretical

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[2] *K*, 47
[3] Ibid. 9
[4] review of *A Window in Thrums*, *Spectator* (21 September, 1889), 373
[5] William Wallace, review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, *Bookman*, IX (December 1895), 95
[6] Robin Gray, 'S. R. Crockett. A Chat about the Author of "The Raiders"', *Great Thoughts*, XXI (August, 1894), 328-30, p.328

status. Knowles implies that the term 'realist' was used only to refer to the naturalists, and that all non-naturalists were considered anti-realist. This is at best a partial truth. It is a critical stance which *can* be witnessed in an article in the *Bookman*, where Maclaren was held to be 'as simple and sincere a student of human nature as any realist,'[7] but that kind of use was only one of a range of possible implementations of the term. It is far more common to find critics discussing Barrie and Maclaren *as* realists. As the *Daily News* said of Maclaren:

> Realism of the most downright, absolute order, his work is, from first to last, but realism seen through one of the most sympathetic, most poetic temperaments of his day.[8]

It is misleading to conclude that the 'choice of a rural alternative' indicates a retreat from realism altogether, because the debate over realism in the last two decades of the century cannot be brought down to a simple binary of realism and anti-realism. The collation between 'realism' and 'poetic' in the above quote strikes at the heart of the aesthetic response taken to both Barrie, in his early fiction, and Maclaren.

In criticism of the novel in this period, realism was not used simply as a synonym for naturalism; it was a highly contested term. To Henry James, realism had 'myriad forms,'[9] and it was Stevenson who perhaps best summarised what was really at stake when Victorian commentators used the term:

> This question of realism, let it then be clearly understood, regards not in the least degree the fundamental truth, but only the technical method of a work of art.[10]

Stevenson is advocating his own aesthetic theory here, but his emphasis on the pliability of the question of realism captures the essence of the debate which had

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[7] 'Ian Maclaren', *Bookman*, 20 (April, 1901), 6-10, p.7
[8] review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, *Daily News*, quoted as an advertisment at the back of *Kate Carnegie and Those Ministers*, 2nd Edition (London, 1896)
[9] Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', 1884, reprinted in *Victorian Criticism of the Novel*, ed. Edwin M. Eigner and George J. Worth (Cambridge, 1985), 193-212, p.201
[10] Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Note on Realism', 1883, in *The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Malcolm Elwin (London, 1950), 376-82, p.378

been taking place in the last third of the century. Before Stevenson advanced his own Romance theories, the debate was not about whether realism should be practised in art but of how it was to be best achieved. The way in which contrasting authors such as George Moore and Ian Maclaren could both be seen as realists by reviewers proves that realism in this age was never an absolute term, but a technical one under constant interrogation.

William Frierson dates the beginning of the 'English Controversy over Realism in Fiction' to 1885, when the number of translations of Zola increased.[11] Although few novelists implemented Zola's theory of writing fiction, naturalism was strongly felt in this period. Texts influenced by French realism were seen as having the potential to corrupt the newly literate masses. The controversy helped generate much of the tension which existed between the writer and the demands of the market-place, and contributed to the suffocating association between literature and morality. The major impact of anti-naturalism was to make the publishing climate such that certain subject matter was largely beyond the scope of fiction, as can be witnessed in the textual history of Hardy's novels. Thomas Knowles has correctly drawn attention to Maclaren's contribution to this moral debate. In an article first published in *Literature* in 1897, Maclaren wrote in complaint of the 'slum school' of fiction:

> One breathes throughout an atmosphere of filth, squalor, profanity, and indecency and is seized with moral nausea. There are such things as drains, and sometimes they may have to be opened, but one would not for choice have one opened in his library.[12]

However, whilst the primary concern of the controversy was undoubtedly non-literary, at least part of the reaction against naturalism was over artistic method. Naturalist fiction was seen as an attempt to impose scientific methods on

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[11] William Frierson, 'The English Controversy over Realism in Fiction', *PMLA*, 43 (1928), 533-50

[12] Ian Maclaren, 'Among My Books: Ugliness in Fiction', *Literature*, II (November 6, 1897), 80-1, p. 80

novel-writing; to prioritise objective description or, to use a word which was regularly employed, to dissect. It was this objectivity which led to derogatory labels such as 'historian', 'reporter' or 'journalist' being applied to French realists and the question being raised of whether such work could be considered artistic at all.[13] The Kailyard authors were thus writing at a time when to be artistic you aimed to *avoid* writing realistically about the grim life of the urban poor. With the professionalisation of empirical sociology and the increase in political journalism, fiction was no longer being seen as the pre-eminent site on which discussion of social and political issues should (or even could) take place; other platforms existed for the writer who wished to get this kind of message across. As Peter Keating has pointed out, nowhere was this more evident than in the novel's 'failure to come to terms in any convincing way with either modern politics or working class life.'[14] Viewed in this historical context, the criticism which has dominated Kailyard fiction - that its authors deliberately avoid reality and shun the issue of Scottish urban, working-class life - emerges even more convincingly as entirely inappropriate; an ahistorical critical idea put most powerfully by a critic entrenched in the literary idioms of the 1930s where there could be such a thing as an 'industrial novel'.[15] To have written about working-class urban life in a documentary, socio-historical way, would have been seen to be artistically bad and to be termed, as Zola often was, a 'reporter'.

Knowles's claim that Barrie and Maclaren retreated from realism is immediately compromised by the fact that a small number of reviews detected a strain of naturalism in Barrie's *Auld Licht Idylls*. The *Aberdeen Free Press* felt 'it may be that Mr Barrie too disproportionately dwells on the wintry side of that world and revels in its dulness and narrowness and perpetual struggle with a sordid

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[13] see G, 57f.
[14] *HS*, 311
[15] George Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (London, 1951). As a creative writer himself Blake pioneered the Scottish industrial novel.

poverty.'[16] Likewise, James Payn wrote in the *Illustrated London News* that 'we cannot help asking ourselves whether we have not been made unnecessarily miserable. If village life is really so wretched as is here depicted what liars are the poets.'[17] More typically, however, reviewers found this work realistic in a different sense. The *Spectator* considered the book 'the most truly *literary*, and the most *realistic* attempt that has been made for years - if not for generations - to reproduce that humble Scotch life.'[18] The juxtaposition of realism with artistic pretension shows a deliberate attempt to see Barrie's text outwith the boundaries of naturalist realism, and it was characteristic of the way most of his early work was received.

Debate over realism was not restricted to Zolaesque naturalism. Indeed in terms of aesthetic matters, criticism of the American School was more widespread. In part the attack was directed towards what was seen as the absence of the 'actual', or 'lifelike' in the fiction of James and Howells, but the most common criticism was directed towards the mundane level which characterised the realism of the American School:

> They have chosen, instead, human motives and situations that are essentially unimportant and incapable of giving real artistic pleasure. True realism must modify its materials by lightness and cheerfulness of touch that will prevent the work from sinking into dullness and vulgarity, but the Americans have debased, not exalted the commonplace.[19]

This idea of 'true realism', as stated here, is very important. It is what Arthur Quiller-Couch referred to when he said of *A Window in Thrums* that 'such a tale is the true triumph of the realist.'[20] For Barrie's fiction to be described as

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[16] review of *Auld Licht Idylls*, *Aberdeen Free Press* (May 10, 1888)
[17] James Payn, review of *A Window in Thrums*, *Illustrated London News* (January 18, 1890)
[18] review of *Auld Licht Idylls*, *Spectator* (May 5, 1888), 609 [italics added]
[19] Arthur Tilley, quoted in the *National Review* for 1883 in G, 52
[20] Quiller-Couch, 'J. M. Barrie', 169

'uncompromising realism,' as it was by one critic,[21] may seem absurd to the present-day reader, but the majority of critics who attacked the French naturalists and the American school were not criticising realism as an overall end - they were arguing that these writers had actually failed to achieve it. Barrie was not seen as a writer who had turned his back on realism, but as one who had got realism right. The critic who saw Barrie's realism as 'uncompromising' spelled out very clearly how this work satisfied one facet of what realism might mean in this era:

> Mr. Kipling is a realist too, but of a less genuine type. His work does not equally carry conviction because of his tendency to give undue prominence to the things we do not wish to look at. If a writer is inclined to parade as a discovery what the wise world has determined to avert its eyes from, his realism, be it ever so sincere, becomes suspect of affectation; it ceases to ring true.[22]

The idea that there was a difference between realism and true realism is evident here, and Barrie's own essays on Hardy and Kipling contributed to the *Contemporary Review* make exactly the same point:

> There are clever novelists in plenty to give us the sentimental aspect of country life, and others can show its crueller side ... But Mr. Hardy is the only man amongst them who can scour the village and miss nothing ... Among English novelists of to-day he is the only realist to be considered. The professional realists of these times, who wear a giant's robe and stumble in it, see only the seamier side of life, reproducing it with merciless detail, holding the mirror up to the unnatural instead of to nature, and photographing by the light of a policeman's lantern. The difference between them and the man whose name they borrow is that they only see the crack in the cup, while he sees the cup with the crack in it.[23]

We must note that Barrie opposes 'realist' here with 'professional realist'. His idea of realism is the same as the 'true realism' mentioned above; the naturalists, he considered, were not realistic because they were selective. It is this idea of 'true realism,' a realism which sees the whole cup, which lies behind the critical

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21 'The Journalist in Fiction', *The Church Quarterly Review*, 36 (1893), 73-92, p. 80
22 Ibid. 81
23 Barrie, 'Thomas Hardy: The Historian of Wessex', 59

reception of his own work. He was announced as someone who deals in 'the truth ... lovingly but unsparingly told,'[24] and who, in an echo of Arnold's phrase, 'sees life steadily and sees it whole.'[25] Indeed one of the few reviews to express small reservations towards either *Auld Licht Idylls* or *A Window in Thrums* did so not by applying alternative criteria but by drawing different conclusions from the same criterion of whether the novelist presented a complete picture:

> Auld Lichtism may seem petty and pitiable, and yet it must have had its redeeming virtues ... Mr. Barrie's picture of it is incomplete, because he does not give sufficient prominence to the spirituality and the faith which lay behind its censoriousness and poverty.[26]

It is the same idea, the failure to see life 'whole', which draws Barrie to criticise Kipling: 'the drawback of collecting dirt in one corner is that it gives a false notion of the filth of the room.'[27] Barrie is not, as first seems, adopting an anti-realist stance here; indeed he goes on to adopt something of a pro-naturalist position:

> That he is entitled as an artist to dwell chiefly on the dirty corner of the room will surely be admitted. A distinguished American writer maintains that certain subjects taken up by daring novelists should be left to the doctors; but is not this a mistake? The novelist's subject is mankind and there is no part of it which he has not the right to treat.

Kipling's problem, however, as Barrie sees it, is a 'want of perspective ... we want to see the whole room lighted up that we may judge the dirty corner by comparison.'[28]

This idea of 'perspective' and seeing life 'whole' was a fictional agenda which would soon be contested by the rationale of modernist fiction, with its

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[24] 'The Journalist in Fiction', *The Church Quarterly Review*, 82
[25] Joseph Ritson, 'The Maker of Modern Idyllism', *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review* (October, 1897), 577-91, p.580
[26] *Spectator* (5 May 1888), 610
[27] J.M. Barrie, 'Mr. Kipling's Stories', *Contemporary Review* (March, 1891), 364-72, p.368
[28] Ibid. 369

claims for seeing reality in fragments, impressions and extremes. Barrie is undoubtedly old-fashioned in this early critical work, but as I will show in chapter 4, the actual course of his fiction leads away from the fictional agenda he is here advocating. As a critical benchmark, seeing life 'whole' seems completely redundant in any discussion of *The Little White Bird*, for example. But the critical success of *Auld Licht Idylls* and, more particularly, *A Window in Thrums* turned on Barrie's appeal to the ideas of 'true realism' or seeing life 'whole', which together formed an aesthetic that was firmly established by the 1880s. The legacy of mid-Victorian criticism of the novel was this pre-occupation with 'true realism' and 'perspective.' It was, of course, an attempt to overcome the threat posed by determinism. 'Realism', in this sense is a bid on the part of reviewers and novelists alike for what 'reality' ought to be; an attempt to create a consensus of opinion in the wake of the challenge of Darwinist thought. Barrie emerged as exactly what one side of the debate considered a realist should be. The *Forum and Century* found that 'the wonderful effects of realism are wrought by simplicity and depth of feeling[29] and *The Spectator* considered *A Window in Thrums* to have 'life, reality, and intellectual sincerity.'[30] The *London Quarterly* found this text 'perhaps even more true to life than the earlier sketches'[31] and the phrase 'true to life' is very important. As used here it does not mean fact, nor, more importantly, giving a comprehensive treatment of the cross-section of life on the societal level; it means making your characters behave according to what was accepted to be human nature, and as Kenneth Graham points out, 'truth to human nature is one of the most widespread and durable critical principles of the age. "Not true-to-life", "blurred", "indistinct", and "caricatures" are perpetually recurrent phrases of condemnation; and "mixed" or "well-rounded" characters become a reviewer's fetish.'[32]

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[29] *Forum and Century*, XI (July, 1891), 596
[30] *Spectator* (September 21, 1889), 373
[31] *London Quarterly and Holborn Review*, 73 (1890), 384
[32] G, 22

Barrie places this idea of being 'true to life' at the centre of his own critical writing and challenges Kipling for having an ignorance of life:

> He believes that because he has knocked about the world in shady company he has no more to learn. It never occurs to him that he is but a beginner in knowledge of life compared to many men who have stayed at home with their mothers.[33]

Barrie's theory of fiction is that you draw from your own concrete experience in order to convey the more abstract concept 'life'. His more particular comment in this instance is that certain experiences are more capable of illuminating 'life'. He is attempting to suggest where 'true' life might be found. His decision, therefore, to tell of what he knows (staying at home with his mother) rather than of what he doesn't (imperialism in India, or, we might point out, industrial Scotland) is both faithful to an artistic idea and a claim that certain kinds of experience are more useful for successfully realising that idea. So when the *Athenaeum* announced *Margaret Ogilvy* as 'a sincere study from life'[34] it was not referring to biographical details, but rather commending the way Barrie's text evoked a sense of understanding human nature, which a writer in the *Spectator* of 1865 stressed was the essential power of a novelist - 'the capacity of representing human nature, of creating any figure without life, which to all who see it shall seem to have life, and life of the vivid kind.'[35]

Ian Maclaren was equally well received on this criterion of true realism. Words like 'whole' or 'completeness' were often part of the laudatory remarks heaped upon him:

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[33] 'Mr. Kipling's Stories', 370
[34] 'Scottish Literature', *Athenaeum* (January 16, 1897), 82
[35] Quoted in G, 23

> Writers of genius have presented to us certain phases of Scotch rural character, Mr. Watson is almost unique in his power of revealing that curiously complex character in all its completeness.[36]

The *Speaker* wrote of his stories that 'their charm is their truth'[37] and William Wallace said of *The Days of Auld Langsyne* that 'here I find no unreality - although there is abundance of what Mr. Arnold in his ignorance of the depths of Scottish nature termed intolerable pathos.'[38] George Lewins' estimate of Maclaren gives a clear sense of what contemporary reviewers were looking for in fiction:

> so many and such varied types of character blending incident with circumstances and facts, rounding them into a fine unity, and giving to the whole a life-like colouring that reminds one of Hogarth's serial pictures.[39]

The same writer declared that Maclaren 'loves to present his pictures in clear light of day, leaving no room for illusion,' and from this concluded that his characters surpassed Barrie's because they were not 'types', but 'feel as if they had come to speak to you directly from real life.'[40] One of the reasons for the decline in Dickens' popularity towards the end of the century was the belief that his characterisation was full of types or abstractions and therefore not true to life. With Maclaren, however, reviewers found that 'his main power is to be found in his faithful portraiture'[41] and that he had drawn 'a very rare truthfulness' out of 'subjects which are dangerously capable of caricature.'[42] The *Daily News* was most fulsome in its praise of Maclaren in this context:

> The characters in 'The Days of Auld Lang Syne' are as actual and real as it is possible for them to be in the printed pages. Their

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[36] review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, *Daily News*, op. cit.
[37] review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, *Speaker*, quoted as an advertisment at the back of *Kate Carnegie and Those Ministers*, op. cit.
[38] William Wallace, *Bookman*, IX (December, 1895), 95
[39] George Lewins, 'Ian Maclaren', *Primitive Methodist Quarterly Review* 18 (July, 1896), 465-74, p. 465-6
[40] Ibid. 471
[41] review of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, *Academy*, 46 (1894), 419
[42] George Adam Smith, review of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, *Bookman*, VII (October, 1894), 11

> delineator has understood them all to the inmost recesses of their being.[43]

What can be noticed from these reviews is that with a few exceptions many of the characteristics which have since been identified as drawbacks to Kailyard fiction were seen in the 1890s as qualities. What was later to be seen as narrow, parochial and suffocatingly Scottish was here seen as 'whole' and 'complete'. What was later to be considered contrived and false was here ubiquitously proclaimed to have 'life' and to be 'true'. Part of the attack on Kailyard by Scottish critics and intellectuals could thus be characterised as a typical modernist attack on Victorian aesthetics. The idea of being 'true to life' was to the Modernists a sign of the sheer emptiness in Victorian critical thinking. But it was the universality of Kailyard fiction - its appeal to the 'true' humanity - which contemporary critics lauded. Crucially, provincialism was not seen as a handicap. Barrie and Maclaren's 'sympathy' and 'human' insight were seen to transcend any potentially parochialising hurdle which might stand in the way of their fiction. The *National Observer* said that in *A Window in Thrums* Barrie had 'so far advanced in knowledge of life and in sympathy with the general run of creatures, that Thrums is no longer Kirriemuir but a congeries of humanity which happens to be in Scotland.'[44] A critic in *McClure's Magazine* considered Maclaren in the same way:

> Dr. Watson has made a study of life in a country parish of Scotland; but, then, his singularly wide knowledge of the world and his singularly sympathetic insight into the human heart here enabled him to interpret that provincial life in the light of the great elemental experiences and emotions common to [all].[45]

These quotes show how the subject-matter of Kailyard was not held to be a hindrance towards the evocation of larger cosmic issues, as MacDiarmid and other critics were later to suggest, but as particularly suited to the exposition of 'life'.

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[43] review of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, *Daily News*, op. cit.
[44] *National Observer* (February 13, 1892)
[45] 'Dr. John Watson - "Ian Maclaren"', *McClure's Magazine*, VII (October, 1896), 387-400, p.399

Finding the universal in the particular was one of the reasons why Victorians delighted in regional fiction:

> One very wise and proper criticism was made by an exiled Kirriemuir man to his sister. He wrote that he bought "A Window in Thrums" eagerly, hoping to recognise old acquaintances. Failing to do so he was at first disappointed, but by-and-by he read it again, and as he did so he realised that the old home was before him, so vividly, so truly, that his heart was full. "And I saw then," he added, "that my old home was the world."[46]

By looking at one review in detail, we can notice further how certain characteristics which have since become criticisms of Kailyard were seen by contemporaries as strengths. *The Little Minister* was announced in *Harper's*, as 'a successful attempt to lift British fiction out of its level of conventionality' - not something which modern critics might suggest. The regional setting and the employment of dialect were not considered to create a narrowing provincialism, but to allow 'the same apprehension of life and sympathy' to be brought out. Barrie was not charged with artistic dishonesty, as he frequently has been, but commended on account that 'he never caricatures his people and never patronises them.' Where subsequent commentators would charge him with exploiting his own people, this reviewer absolves him of that charge and also of the charge that he trivialises the situations created by pandering to the readers' emotions and allowing them to act as voyeurs:

> The humour is their humour and not the smartness of the author; and the pathos is in the situation, the inevitable sadness of human life limited and at disadvantage, and not in the sentimentality of the observer.[47]

Clearly, then, our modern day responses to fiction are, on the whole, different from that of the Victorians. To the twentieth-century mind it doesn't seem to make much sense to call Barrie's or Maclaren's fiction realistic or true to life.

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[46] Margaretta Byrde, 'Thrums', *Great Thoughts*, XXIX (August, 1898), 325-6, p.325
[47] *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 84 (May, 1892), 965-7

The genesis of this twentieth-century view can be detected in small measure in some contemporary remarks, suggesting that the 1890s was a time of shifting attitudes. By 1896, for example, the idea of Barrie as artistically dishonest was creeping in. Writing in *The Saturday Review*, H.G. Wells complained that *Sentimental Tommy* was

> quite evidently written primarily to please, to stir pleasurable regrets, suggest amiable consolations, and move to a genial laughter. One feels that Mr. Barrie has written down to an imagined "Public."[48]

So far as Barrie's earlier fiction was concerned, however, this kind of criticism was rare, and Wells is one of the few dissenting voices in the immediate contemporary response to Barrie and Maclaren. Commenting on *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, he cynically remarks:

> There are people who will read that story with tears, and it is even possible that Mr. Maclaren, good simple soul! believed it human as he wrote.[49]

Wells's opinion was to emerge as the general critical consensus as soon as the twentieth century turned. By 1900 Barrie's early fiction could be taken to task by a reviewer for failing to achieve what most critics, ten years earlier, felt to be its outstanding feature:

> the first and noblest aim of literature is not either to tickle or to stab the sensibilities, but to render a coherent view of life's apparent incoherence, to give shape to the amorphous, to discover beauty which was hidden, to reveal essential truth ... This supreme visual power, this virtue of the eye which creates by seeing, Mr. Barrie does not possess.[50]

Similarly, when Hugh Walker compiled his survey of Victorian literature in 1910, he labelled Maclaren as 'not true to nature.'[51] Clearly, however, the positive

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[48] [H.G. Wells], *The Saturday Review* (November 14, 1895), 526
[49] [H.G. Wells], *The Saturday Review* (November 30, 1895), 735
[50] 'Mr. J. M. Barrie. An Inquiry', *Academy* (November 10, 1900), 445
[51] Hugh Walker, *The Literature of the Victorian Era* (Cambridge, 1910), 811

reception of Kailyard in the 1890s shows that even if only for a short time, mid-Victorian ideas of realism in Art held fast. By understanding the methodology of that realism, the way in which it is grounded in Victorian ideas of sympathy and the sentimental, we can appreciate why Maclaren's work in particular achieved the critical success it did.

In his essay on Kipling, Barrie concludes by complaining 'there is no sympathy with humanity, without which there never was and never will be a true novelist.'[52] We may be inclined to link this with the typical banner of sentimentalism which is usually cast around Barrie, but he is really only echoing an established Victorian aesthetic. Towards the end of *Adam Bede*, George Eliot's narrator describes 'sympathy' as 'the one poor word which includes all our best insight and our best love' (531). In her critical essay 'The Natural History of German Life', Eliot made clear the artist's obligation to sympathy:

> The greatest benefit we owe to the artist, whether painter, poet, or novelist, is the extension of our sympathies ... Art is the nearest thing to life; it is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot.[53]

It is this theory of art which lies behind the laudatory use of the word 'human' in Kailyard reviews: 'it is humorous; it is pathetic; it is realistic; it is romantic; above all it is human'[54] wrote one critic of *A Window in Thrums*, and reviews frequently classed Barrie's writing as having a 'broad humanity'[55] or as making 'us feel the bonds of our common humanity.'[56] The latter remark clearly owes something to

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52 'Mr Kipling's Stories', 371
53 'The Natural History of German Life', 1856, repr. *George Eliot: Selected Critical writings*, ed. Rosemary Ashton (Oxford and New York, 1992), 260-95, pp. 263-4
54 Louise Chandler Moulton, 'James Matthew Barrie: His Place in Literature', *Lippincott's Monthly* (May, 1892), 633-5, p.634
55 *Critic* (January 16, 1892), 32.
56 Colin Weird, 'J. M. Barrie as a Novelist', *Great Thoughts*, XIX (August, 1893), 384-6, p. 384

the critical idea of Burns, but it is also exactly what George Eliot had been advocating in detail:

> If Art does not enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally ... the only effect I ardently long to produce by my writings, is that those who read them should be better able to *imagine* and to *feel* the pains and joys of those who differ from themselves in everything but the broad fact of being struggling erring human creatures.[57]

Thus to Eliot and the Victorians, the ability to arouse the reader into a sympathetic emotional response to the situation created was the purpose of Art. The act of feeling, or expressing sympathy, was a sign that author and reader shared the same moral values, and it is this sharing of moral values which is the key to understanding Victorian ideas of the sentimental. In chapter 4, I give a discussion of sentimentalism as a theme in Barrie's fiction. In this chapter I am concerned with the work of art as a sentimental object itself.

The death of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop* was one of many scenes in Dickens's novels which became famous for moving their readers to tears. By the 1890s, however, this sort of response to a literary text was becoming so outdated as to appear comical. Oscar Wilde famously remarked that he thought 'one must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing.'[58] But what was old-fashioned nevertheless retained a certain appeal, and it is not unusual to find references in this period to readers crying over the work of Ian Maclaren. In an introduction to one of Maclaren's later works, for example, Charles W. Gordon, the real name of the author 'Ralph Connor', recorded his first exposure to Maclaren's stories:

> Twelve years ago, to while away the hour of a journey from Edinburgh to Glasgow, I bought the British Weekly and began to read, at first idly, then with interest, and at last with delight, a story

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[57] Letter to Charles Bray, 5 July 1859, *The George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon S. Haight (London, 1954), 7 Vols, III, p.111 [italics added]
[58] Quoted by Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London, 1987), 441

> entitled "A Lad O' Pairts." "Read that," I said, thrusting the paper into the hands of my Scotch professor friend in Glasgow. He stood up at the mantel, but had not gone far in his reading when "Jean," he called to his wife in the next room, "come in here and listen to this;" and read, till, unawares, his voice failed, broke, and I discovered him with shamed face looking at us through tears.[59]

A widespread criticism of Kailyard in Scottish literary circles is that these texts are designed only to arouse the reader into a sympathetic emotional response,[60] but it was exactly this which many commentators considered to be meaningful and important about Maclaren's work. As one critic remarked:

> never during all these years have I read a book which moved me so constantly and profoundly as I was moved on that October evening during three hours or thereabouts spent in the vicinage of the bonnie brier bush.[61]

In the twentieth century, the idea of art 'moving' its audience has come to be seen as suspicious, manipulative and cheap. Art which arouses an emotion is now seen as aesthetically inferior to art which alienates its readers through techniques of defamiliarisation. In discussion of the Victorian period, however, we seem to have lost sight of the fact that arousing the audience's emotions was a typical artistic strategy. Much of the rhetorical method of Victorian fiction was concerned with encouraging the reader to adopt a specific response to the text - to be moved to tears, laughter or, Eliot's beloved term, sympathy. Whether it is because of the dominance of Leavisite criticism, the troublesome categorisation of the nineteenth-century as the era of social realism or because of the attack on it by Modernist novelists, the prevalence and significance of sentimentalism as a literary technique in the Victorian period has been greatly under-represented. Fred Kaplan argues that sentimentalism underpins much of the output of many of the novelists of the period and that it 'should not be evaluated in terms offered by the mimetic

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59 "Ralph Connor", introduction to Ian Maclaren, *St. Judes* (London, [1907]), v
60 This is one of the main criticisms made by Ian Campbell (C, 99f)
61 James Ashcroft Noble, 'Ian Maclaren at Home', *Woman at Home*, III (March, 1895), 511-21, p.512

tradition ... to which it is in fundamental, purposeful opposition.'[62] Kaplan is keen to draw a distinction between sentimentality and sensibility:

> Sentimentality is the possession of innate moral sentiments; sensibility is a state of psychological-physical responsiveness ... [the Victorians] were attracted to sentimentality as a moral and communal ideal rather than to sensibility, which promoted separation and withdrawal ... *The Man of Feeling* had lost most of its relevance by the Victorian years. In contrast, Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) became for the Victorians the bible of moral sentiment.[63]

This was precisely the taste for which Maclaren's fiction catered. Commenting on the characters in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, the *Times* stated that 'out of the pages of Oliver Goldsmith we hardly know where to look for their equals in sheer unaffected warm-heartedness.'[64] Ian Campbell has categorised the technique of Kailyard writers as a kind of outdated Mackenzie-like sensibility, but although this fiction does seem to encourage an illicit emotional response from the reader, it is not designed simply to test the powers of response to external stimuli (sensibility). Instead, it was seen to confirm a very important and prevalent Victorian philosophical position: that moral sanctions were internal to the individual, and that because they were shared by all humanity, communality was a realisable social ideal. Victorian Sentimentalists took as their philosophical base Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which they had inherited through such novelists as Fielding, Richardson and Goldsmith, and which argued for the existence of innate moral sentiments. This is the philosophical framework behind the phrases 'human nature' and 'true to life' that characterised reviews of Kailyard texts, and it is exactly what George Eliot is saying: the reader emotionally identifies with the situation created because of shared moral values; values which were seen as innate, universal to all humanity, and therefore capable of being aroused. Indeed

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62 Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Literature* (Princeton, 1987), 5
63 Ibid. 33-4
64 *Times* (January 19, 1895), 4

in 'The Natural History of German Life', quoted earlier, where she talks about the extension of sympathies, Eliot makes a direct reference to the idea of moral sentiment:

> a picture of human life, such as a great artist can give, surprises even the trivial and the selfish into that attention to what is apart from themselves, which may be called the raw material of moral sentiment

This philosophical framework is what lies behind both the content and technique of Ian Maclaren's fiction and helps explains why his work appealed to the Victorian reading and reviewing public.

The idea of shared human values is the central ideological drive of Maclaren's fiction and the core of his theology. The religious dimension of his writing has been closely treated by Thomas Knowles, who concludes that he projected a '"higher-level" attitude of reconciliation and integration' which was a 'conscious standpoint deriving from his moderate universalist position in the religious debate.'[65] The historical background of this religious debate has been further outlined by Christopher Harvie, who argues that the sentimentality of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* was 'bound up with its didactic purpose - to help implant, in rather stony soil, a religion, heterodox and humanistic, which could moderate the sectarian hatreds of earlier years.' As Harvie makes clear, this gives Maclaren's work the 'structure of a sermon' and makes the device of Drumtochty 'not a reminiscence, but a carefully restructured community and innovative religious ideology.'[66] Throughout his ministerial career Maclaren championed the importance of the Church's social role which he believed had become obscured by the points of theological crisis raised by the impact of Darwinism and German biblical scholarship. In this sense Maclaren's fiction can best be characterised as the

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[65] K, 178

[66] Christopher Harvie, 'Drumtochty Revisited: The Kailyard', *Scottish Review*, 27 (August 1982), 4-11

construction of an idealised Godly Commonwealth, a strategy which links back to his Free Church predecessor Thomas Chalmers. Individuals always act for the common good, hence the eulogistic concentration on important community figures such as the doctor, the minister and the dominie. The common good is identified as either the family or the parish as a whole. Drumtochty often seems to stand as a character in itself, holding together all of the human life contained within it:

> It was George Howe's funeral that broke the custom and closed the "service." When I came into the garden where the neighbours were gathered, the "wricht" was removing his tray, and not a glass had been touched. Then I knew that Drumtochty had a sense of the fitness of things, and was stirred to its depths. (BBBB 43)

All of the content of Maclaren's fiction is geared towards playing out the communal idea. A story in *The Days of Auld Langsyne* presents a tyrannous Episcopalian factor who refuses to renew the lease of his tenant unless farmer Burnbrae agrees to leave the Free Church. Burnbrae duly refuses and his farm holdings are duly put up for auction. The parish, however, rallies round. Another farmer, Drumsheugh, calls for the people to bid high prices for Burnbrae's stock:

> "there's ae thing in oor poo'er. We can see that Burnbrae hes a gude roup, an', gin he maun leave us, that he cairries eneuch tae keep him an' the gudewife for the rest o' their days." (DALS 69)

This they do, but that is not all. Burnbrae makes a stirring plea to the landowner himself, Lord Kilspindie, who is so moved by the simplicity of the rhetoric that he makes sure the lease is returned to Burnbrae. To cap it all the parish honourably returns all of Burnbrae's stock free of charge and the strength of the Godly Commonwealth - from landowner to peasant - is reasserted.

In 'Domsie', the first story in *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, communal living is extolled through the image of the local boy made good. This is perhaps the most famous of Maclaren's stories and, as I showed in my introduction, it has given rise to an accepted definition of Kailyard as ubiquitously concerned with lads o'

pairts. Geordie Howe, a brilliant young scholar, goes out from Drumtochty to Edinburgh University where he scoops all the prizes and medals only to fall ill and return home to die. The lad o' pairts is projected as belonging to the community: the only way in which Geordie can get to university is through community co-operation - Drumsheugh, a local farmer paying his fees - and his eventual success is projected as a triumph for the parish. George's illness allows Maclaren to show the community coming together in a universal embrace of religion which transcends denominational dissension. The final part of the story, 'A Scholar's Funeral', balances humour with sentiment. Drumtochty, we are told, 'had a genius for burials' and the beginning of the story is overtly comic in tone:

> Drumtochty gave itself to a "beerial" with chastened satisfaction, partly because it lay near to the sorrow of things, and partly because there was nothing of speculation in it. "Ye can hae little real pleesure in a merrige," explained our gravedigger. In whom the serious side had been perhaps abnormally developed, "for ye never ken hoo it will end; but there's nae risk about a 'beerial.'" (BBBB 41)

As the story progresses, however, the tone becomes more serious as the various characters are brought together in the communion of Geordie's death. The Doctor's funeral Prayer is reduced from theological complexity to the kind of simplicity Maclaren advocated in his own preaching:

> The doctor made a good start, and had already sighted Job, when he was carried out of his course by a sudden current, and began to speak to God about Marget and her son, after a very simple fashion that brought a lump to the throat, till at last, as I imagine, the sight of the laddie working at his Greek in the study of a winter night came up before him, and the remnants of the great prayer melted like an iceberg in the Gulf Stream.
>
> "Lord, hae peety upon us, for we a' luved him, and we were a' prood o' him." (BBBB 48)

The simple rhetoric is what is required to bring together all denominations. As Christopher Harvie has commented, 'at the funeral the village undergoes a

moral rebirth'[67] and Maclaren's fiction regularly centres on the emotion of renewal coming from spiritual doubt. The first story grouped under the heading 'The Transformation of Lachlan Campbell', introduces Lachlan as 'A Grand Inquisitor' whose 'life business was theology.' An 'old Highlandman' and extreme Presbyterian, Lachlan is soon at odds with the minister, whose first sermon embodies the same theological principles as Maclaren himself held. In order to set up the conflicting theological visions, Maclaren recounts a moment of spiritual doubt on the part of the minister:

> For some days a storm of wind and rain had been stripping the leaves from the trees and gathering them in sodden heaps upon the ground. The minister looked out on the garden where many holy thoughts had visited him, and his heart sank like lead, for it was desolate, and of all its beauty there remained but one rose clinging into its stalk, drenched and faded. It seemed as if youth, with its flower of promise and hope, had beaten down, and a sense of loneliness fell on its soul. He had no heart for work, and he crept to bed broken and dispirited. (BBBB 108)

The decaying organic imagery is typical of the way Maclaren projects spiritual matters in natural terms. The next day brings a renewal in nature and with it a renewal in the minister's faith in human sympathy and divine intervention:

> The morrow was one of those glorious days which herald winter, and as the minister tramped along the road, where the dry leaves crackled beneath his feet, and climbed to the moor with head on high, the despair of yesterday had vanished ... He had received a warm welcome from all kinds of people, and now he marked with *human sympathy* each little homestead with its belt of firs against the winter's storms, and its stackyard where the corn had been gathered safe ... God seemed to have given him a sermon, and he wrote that evening, like one inspired, on the same parable of nature Jesus loved, with its subtle interpretation of our sorrows, joys, trust, and hope. (BBBB 109, emphasis added)

Inspired by the nature around him, the minister delivers his sermon to the delight of all the glen except Lachlan, who bemoans the absence of 'sound doctrine.'

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[67] ibid. 8

Doctrinal religion was anathema to Maclaren's religious persuasion but he does not emerge as a tract-writer in this story; it is not Lachlan's theology which he abhors, but the way both he and the minister are guilty of a failure to achieve human communality:

> Perhaps the minister would have understood Lachlan better if he had known that the old man could not touch food when he got home, and spent the evening in a fir wood praying for the lad he had begun to love. And Lachlan would have had a lighter heart if he had heard the minister questioning himself whether he had denied the Evangel or sinned against one of Christ's disciples. They argued together; they prayed apart. (BBBB 111)

We must note in passing how once again Campbell is aroused into love of the minister through spending the evening in close communion with nature. More crucially in this passage doctrine is presented as obscuring the 'human sympathy' which, to Maclaren, naturally occurs even in hearts as hard as Lachlan Campbell's. The reader is meant to respond with suspended judgement between the two parties. Both characters are equally capable of being led astray. Because of a failure of human communication, Lachlan does not express his uncertainties over doctrine, uncertainties which prove valid when the minister decides to base his subsequent sermons on 'a "course" on Biblical criticism', which would 'place Drumtochty on a level with Germany.' (BBBB 113) In his own teaching Maclaren rejected Biblical Scholarship fashionable in Germany which posed serious questions on the reliability of the Bible as revealed truth. Inside the text, the effects of the minister's sermons are instantly disruptive: 'within a month the Free Kirk was in an uproar.' (BBBB 114)

In a book published in 1899, the Rev. S. Law Wilson summarised Maclaren's aim in his stories as 'largely to convince us of the uselessness of all theology,'[68] and indeed Maclaren was not really interested in points of theology,

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[68] Rev. S. Law Wilson, *The Theology of Modern Literature* (Edinburgh, 1899), 324

only in eradicating differences implicit in theological conflict. As Christopher Harvie has noted, his principal role was in promoting a unified religious community and a social role for the Church:

> there is little evidence to show that Watson ever possessed fundamental religious beliefs. He was, on the other hand, a major innovator in parochial organisation, in the reorientation of the Presbyterian churches from sectarian partisanship to a social role - both locally through choirs, slum mission, youth groups - and as an interest-group in the state. Religious doubts were thus to be mitigated by the promotion of 'Christian Community' and religious unity.[69]

Such an ideology pervades this story. The minister seeks out Marget Howe, the mother of the dead lad o' pairts featured in the first story in the collection, and is convinced by her not only of the need to temper his interest in Biblical criticism but to seek out Lachlan as well. Respectful of each other's opinions the two come together in a moment of communality which strikes at the heart of Maclaren's social and religious vision:

> They knelt together on the earthen floor of that Highland cottage, the old school and the new, before one Lord, and the only difference in their prayers was that the young man prayed they might keep the faith once delivered unto the saints, while the burden of the old man's prayer was that they might be led into all truth. (BBBB 120)

Hostilities and disputations are suspended in an ecumenical moment. The picture is overtly idealistic, designed not to reflect society but promote a vision of the perfect which the reader is invited to respond to emotionally.

The two collections *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* and *The Days of Auld Langysyne* encompass Maclaren's vision of the perfect and the concluding story is probably one of the best. Once again the theme (somewhat repetitive by now) is reintegration into the community, but the story takes place on a number of levels

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[69] Harvie, 'Drumtochty Revisited', 10

and shows very clearly how Maclaren achieves his sentimental effects. 'Oor Lang Hame', is about a returning exile. Chairlie Grant has been referred to in preceding stories as a son of Drumtochty now 'in Americky.' On his return he is introduced as speaking in a 'mixed accent' but quickly slips back into Drumtochty dialect when his emotions are stirred:

> And then, as he left the station, the unknown said, as if recollecting his native tongue, "Gude day, Peter; it's a comfort tae see ae kent face aifter mony changes". (340)

In this story we can see clearly the impact which is created by having Drumtochty projected as a secluded space cut off from the outside world. The returning exile is at first unaware that the railway line stops at Kildrummie and that he will either have to walk to Drumtochty or take the 'dogcairt.' Leaving America and the railway line behind Chairlie takes the road to Drumtochty which is evocatively drawn by Maclaren in strong natural images:

> The road to Drumtochty, after it had thrown off Kildrummie, climbed a hill, and passed through an open country till it plunged into the pine-woods. The wind was fresh, blowing down from the Grampians, with a suggestion of frost, and the ground was firm underfoot. The pungent scent of ripe turnips was in the air, mingled, as one passed a stackyard, with the smell of the newly gathered grain, whose scattered remains clung to the hedges. (341)

The story follows a Wordsworthian pastoral strain as the exile passes a vagabond who has been turned out of a house, gives him some money and then enters the pines in a passage which explicitly creates an Edenic setting:

> His pace sheltered as he entered the pines, and the kindly shelter and the sweet fragrance seemed to give him peace. In the centre of the wood there was an open space, with a pool and a clump of gorse. He sat down and rested his head on his hands. (342)

It is here that Maclaren introduces the main sentiment of the story - the emotion of returning home. It is in this pastoral setting that Chairlie reads over two letters by James Soutar which tell of the deaths of his grandmother and sister and

which were responsible for bringing about his return to Drumtochty. Maclaren allows the letters to become, in T.S. Eliot's phrase, the objective correlative of the emotion of loss, grief and return. Maclaren charges his object with emotion - we are told that the letters 'were almost worn away with handling' - but he is careful not to overdo things nor be indiscriminate; the letters, and the letters alone, are what focus the weight of the emotion contained in the drama. On a thematic level, the sentiments contained in the letters are what is needed to ensure Chairlie's reintegration into the community, but it is reintegration on a higher level as well, because as the title has already indicated, the return to the Glen is projected as a return to paradise; a return to the home which will lead its natives to 'oor lang hame', a colloquial expression for Heaven:

> There is a certain point where the road from Kildrummie disentangles itself from the wood, and begins the descent to Tochty Bridge. Drumtochty exiles used to stand there for a space and rest their eyes on the Glen which they could now see ... Two Drumtochty students returning in the spring with their honours might talk of learned studies and resume their debates coming through the wood, but as the trees thinned conversation languished, and then the lads would go over the stile. No man said aught unto his neighbour as they drank in the Glen, but when they turned and went down the hill a change had come over them. (347)

The Eucharistic image of drinking in the Glen captures the integrated vision here of the ideal but real world of home and the ideal but real world of apocalyptic certainty. Maclaren's ideological drive is everywhere apparent in the texture of his vocabulary. Communality is projected on two levels: the human commonwealth and the Godly Commonwealth. The story, rather like a miniature *Silas Marner*, charts a movement from withdrawal and individual seclusion to sociability and integration. Chairlie plans to avoid meeting and speaking to anyone on his return, and after a visit to his grandmother's ruined cottage - perhaps this time an explicit echo of Wordsworth - he goes to the kirkyard and the graves of his relatives. It is here that he is drawn back into human society by discovering that he shares the sentiments of others. Uncomforted by any prayer he can say in private,

> he was minded to creep away softly and leave Drumtochty for ever - his heart full of a vain regret - when he found there was another mourner in the kirkyard. (355)

Drawn by the feelings of communal sentiment, Chairlie speaks to his fellow mourner - Drumsheugh - and allows himself to be reintegrated into human community as he accompanies Drumsheugh back to his house.

F.R. Hart has written that this idyll is 'subtle in its finality' and he is right to point to the overwhelming ethos of death and decline:

> So the book ends. Chairlie will not stay, and left alone, Drumsheugh will die soon. The field is empty, the harvest safe at last. One comes home only to die; this place, living in the image of Drumsheugh's warmth and kindliness and safety, is already dead.[70]

In apparently failing to pick up the meaning of the title, however, and not being completely attentive to the detail of the ending, Hart overstresses the sense of finality. We are told in the final paragraph that

> Chairlie Grant went in with Drumsheugh to the kindly light, while the darkness fell upon the empty harvest field, from which the last sheaf had been safely garnered. (358)

The harvest field is empty and the sheaf that has been garnered is the last, so the sense is clearly that Drumtochty is past, but the emotion which the story evokes is designed to lead to the *kindly light* which is at once a metaphor of organic reintegration into human community and an explicit apocalyptic reference. This final story is one of Maclaren's more successful idylls in the way it integrates his vision without recourse to preaching, and evokes emotion through use of objective correlatives that are never overdone.

Eric Anderson makes an interesting point when he says that 'an age like ours, which approves frank description of the sexual act but finds the act of dying

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[70] Francis Russell Hart, *The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey* (London, 1978), 123

embarrassing in reality and in fiction, cannot quite respond as did Maclaren's original readers, whose taboos we have neatly reversed.'[71] The reversal of taboos is what makes Maurice Lindsay dismiss Maclaren's work as containing scenes of 'the utmost triviality', as if death and spiritual faith are universally acknowledged as trivial subjects; to most of Maclaren's contemporaries they were the profoundest subjects of all.[72] Unless we make some attempt to reverse the taboos Anderson speaks of, we will fail to appreciate how Maclaren's work could have appealed in quite the way it did. By focussing too narrowly on representation of the nation, the Kailyard term has precluded discussion of the literary modes and conventions employed by Maclaren which show more clearly and usefully what his artistic strategies were and why his fiction appealed so much to his contemporary audience.

Maclaren's choice in writing idylls was one which, despite his clear attack on naturalism in 'Ugliness in Fiction,'[73] still allowed for his work, as we have seen, to be identified as realistic. Reviews and contemporary appreciations drew attention to the tendency for Maclaren to over-glorify Scottish character but the majority saw his Edenic vision as an acceptable artistic choice. An article in the *Bookman* gave its readers biographical details which proved that because of his childhood experiences on farms and in bothies Maclaren was well aware of the darker side of rural life.

> He could tell of these things as plainly and remorselessly as any man. But he has chosen to be silent. Because he has confined himself to one aspect, it does not follow that this aspect is untrue. When we admit the lifelikeness of David Teniers the younger's studies of vulgar Dutch life, we are surely not driven to conclude that the painter who omits such scenes is false to his art or to life.[74]

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71 Anderson, 'The Kailyard Revisited', 138
72 Maurice Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, 1977, revised ed. (London, 1992), 349
73 Ian Maclaren, 'Ugliness in Fiction', 80-1
74 'Ian Maclaren', *Bookman*, 20 (April, 1901), 6-10, p.10

In an interview given shortly after the publication of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* we actually see Maclaren flirting with the idea of writing something like *The House with the Green Shutters*. He announced that after completing *The Days of Auld Langsyne*, 'I should like to write a story dealing with the darker side of Scottish life - and there is a darker side that I have not yet touched.'[75] Given the associations that have been built up around Maclaren due to the eventual course of his writing career, this is a really surprising remark. It suggests, however, that the decision to write idylls was as much a choice of literary genre as of moral conscience. The contemporary critic George Lewins emphasised the importance of Maclaren's *artistic* aims:

> people have asked, and are still asking, is it possible that such people act, or have ever acted in a Scotch parish? ... we believe, with others, that had he wished he could have written a realistic chronicle at which some of his critics would start. But that is not his aim in these stories. His avowed aim is to bring out what is idyllic ... he has seized the moments at which the hidden beauty of the soul leaps into vision, and has shown us what nobleness and heroism the humblest of mankind are capable of.[76]

It is that 'hidden beauty of the soul' which contemporary reviewers cited as realistic in Maclaren's work and which is the artistic strategy of sentimental fiction. Sentimentality must not be seen as a reaction against realism because a specific meaning of realism is contained within its own theoretical structure. Through implementing the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Victorians opposed philosophical realism with philosophical idealism without opposing realism as a concept altogether. Their argument was that because there are innate moral sentiments, things can be seen as they should really (as in *real*) be. In this sense real *is* ideal. It is this premise to realism which allows *The Speaker* to say without any intended oxymoron that Maclaren's 'pictures are marvels of idealistic realism.'[77] Realism in

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[75] Noble, 'Ian Maclaren at Home', 519
[76] George Lewins, 'Ian Maclaren', 472
[77] *Speaker*, quoted as advertisment at end of *Kate Carnegie and Those Ministers*, 2nd Edition, (London, 1896)

this sense does not mean, as it did for the naturalists, purely the recording of external subject-matter; it incorporates an awareness that the real was what was felt to be the ideal world by the individual's (author's and reader's) innate moral faculties - about how inner meaning sees how external matter *should* be. It is this idea which is being invoked by the reviewer in *Blackwood's Magazine* who said that Barrie's *Margaret Ogilvy* was a 'picture in which every line is ideal yet every touch absolutely true.'[78] As Linda Anderson has remarked, 'art was socially valuable not because it *derived* from the prevailing conditions of society but because it could *impose* its superior reality on society.'[79] It is surely this idea of realism as something greater than the mere act of recording appearances which lies behind the realist reception of Kailyard. As was said of Maclaren, 'the fascination is intensely realistic and yet the conception which produces it is in the highest sense ideal.'[80] This is the same attitude towards realism that was expressed in mid-century by George Lewes, who argued that the opposite of realism, was not idealism but "falsism."[81] For Lewes,

> the true meaning of Idealism is precisely this vision of realities in their highest and most affecting forms, not in the vision of something removed from or opposed to realities.[82]

Maclaren's idealism, as discussed above, fitted this framework exactly; so too, for a time, did J.M. Barrie. The eventual course of Barrie's fiction, however, left this somewhat dated aesthetic behind. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

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[78] *Blackwood's Magazine*, 161 (April, 1897), 481
[79] Linda Anderson, *Bennett, Wells and Conrad: Narrative in Transition* (Basingstoke, 1988), 7 [italics added]
[80] George Lewins, 'Ian Maclaren', 471
[81] Quoted by George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination; English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago and London, 1981), 10
[82] quoted by Anderson, *Bennett, Wells and Conrad*, 18

IV

REALISM, SENTIMENTALISM AND SEXUALITY IN THE FICTION OF J.M. BARRIE

> on the whole I cannot help thinking that, if we had *life*, we should have no need of *art* ... I simply do not understand how a truly happy individual could ever hit upon the idea of producing "art": only in life can we "achieve" anything - is our "art" therefore not simply a confession of our impotence?[1]

Chapter 2 concluded with a discussion of Barrie's early novels, showing how his work has been misrepresented through being discussed under the banner of Kailyard. I noted in my introduction how this critical concept has had a categorical and lasting impact on the overall evaluation of Barrie within the context of Scottish literature. Particularly significant is the fact that his four full-length novels have rarely been considered by critics eager to make comprehensive judgements on his fiction as a whole. In this chapter, I will look at these novels by building on the discussion of realism carried out in chapter 3. That discussion showed how Barrie's early fiction appealed to a mid-century idea of realism which was re-invoked at the end of the century in reaction to naturalism. Barrie's relationship with realism is more complicated than this, however, because his fiction quickly moves away from a number of the pre-requisites of this mid-century realism. In this chapter I will argue instead that it both contributes to and transforms the other realist debate which gathered pace in the 1880s, over whether realism should be practised at all.

The period 1880-1900 saw 'more writing directly concerned with the art of fiction than had appeared in the previous half-century,'[2] and what was to come out of this intense activity was a reaction against the emphasis on external reality.

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[1] Richard Wagner, quoted by Michael Tanner, *Wagner* (London, 1996), 99

[2] John Charles Olmsted, introduction to *A Victorian Art of Fiction: Essays on the Novel in British Periodicals 1870-1900* (New York and London, 1979), xiv

Although they were in dispute over the art of fiction, Robert Louis Stevenson and Henry James both argued for a concentration on something other than the recording of external reality. In so doing, they helped pave the way for the fictional theories of Virginia Woolf and other Modernist novelists. James, with his emphasis on the importance of the creative mind of the producer, attacked the idea of 'external', whilst Stevenson argued for the relativity of anything that might be termed 'reality'. *The Little Minister* is a novel which shows Barrie moving with rather than reacting against these twin attacks on the idea of realism in fiction. The real, topographically identifiable setting which had created so much of the appeal of the earlier works was here disturbed by the emergence of settings and characters which leaned towards the fantastic. Furthermore, Barrie showed his growing interest in metafiction and in the working mind of the creative artist, themes which would become central to the *Tommy* novels and the experimental narratives of *The Little White Bird*, and which would lead on to his later plays. *The Little Minister* cannot be adequately appreciated within the paradigm of Kailyard. In this chapter I will place Barrie's four most important novels in a more revealing cultural context, one which will claim for him an important place in the development of the British novel as it historically led away from Victorian realism through Stevensonian Romance towards modernism.

The swing away from external reality towards the inner life was a product of the reaction against naturalism. Three of the main proponents of Romance, Rider Haggard, Hall Caine and Andrew Lang, all wrote essays which show that a substantial part of their theory of fiction was drawn from a reaction against naturalism. In each case clear artistic reasons are outlined as well as moral ones. Hall Caine, for example, makes a twin attack: the naturalists are to be condemned for only painting the world's cesspools but also for 'missing the real aim of a true literature', which is not to 'paint the world as it is', but to allow 'the eye of the imagination' to complete the 'disproportionate fragment' that the 'physical eye' sees.

To Caine, it is a question of what the writer does with the bare tools of reality: '[the idealist] starts from exactly the same scene as the realist, the scene of daily life.' His words indicate that realism and idealism were no longer capable of being seen as synonyms:

> I take realism to mean the doctrine of the importance of the real facts of life, and idealism the doctrine of the superiority of ideal existence over the facts of life.[3]

Linda Anderson cites Caine's words as epitomising a shift in the definition of the terms realism and idealism: 'idealism is no longer being seen in terms of an intensification or abstraction from reality but as in some sense superior or different to it.'[4] To Caine, merely seeing the facts of life - of external reality - is not Art:

> it is only the eye of imagination, the eye of faith, that sees the balance of good and evil struck somewhere and in some way ... if it were possible for him [the realist] to paint that world as he sees it, the chances are that he would thereby be doing the world much harm.[5]

What Anderson calls 'the coalescence of fact and value' deriving from a belief in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments* which had made it possible for idealism to be seen in realism, was now breaking apart. Rider Haggard's words make it clear that ordinary external reality was seen as just too mundane:

> More and more, as what we call culture spreads, do men and women crave to be taken out of themselves. More and more do they long to be brought face to face with Beauty, and stretch out their arms towards that vision of the Perfect, which we see only in books and dreams[6]

Barrie noted exactly this in his private notebook of 1892: 'The great aim of novel to take us out of ourselves.'[7] It was no longer being seen as possible to espouse the

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[3] Hall Caine, 'The New Watchwords of Fiction', *Contemporary Review*, 57 (1890), 479-88, p. 480
[4] Anderson, *Bennett, Wells and Conrad*, 19
[5] Caine, 'The New Watchwords of Fiction', 479-80
[6] H. Rider Haggard, 'About Fiction', *Contemporary Review*, LI (1887), 172-80, p.173
[7] Beinecke Library, MS A2/13

ideal in the real world, it had to be seen in a world which was of romance, fantasy or allegory. To Rider Haggard, 'English life is surrounded by conventionalism, and English fiction has come to reflect the conventionalism, not the life.'[8] Under this theory it is a hindrance to be 'mercilessly bound down to the prose of a somewhat dreary age;'[9] fiction cannot be produced in these terms, the present and existing 'English' society cannot provide sufficient, or the right quality, fuel.

Kenneth Graham identifies 1887 as 'the year of recognition for the new romance,'[10] but Robert Louis Stevenson had been publishing essays advocating new departures since 1882. Chiefly because of the successful marketing of him by Andrew Lang, Stevenson became the leading Romance theorist. For him 'truth to life' was not only undesirable, but impossible:

> No art - to use the daring phrase of Mr. James - can "compete with life" ... Man's one method, whether he reasons or creates, is to half-shut his eyes against the dazzle and confusion of reality ... [a] novel is not a transcript of life, to be judged by its exactitude; but a simplification of some side or point of life, to stand or fall by its significant simplicity.[11]

In 'A Note on Realism', we see Stevenson aiming to strike fresh ground beyond both the naturalists and the American School of James and Howells: 'All representative art, which can be said to live is both real and ideal; and the realism about which we quarrel is a matter purely of externals.'[12] Stevenson's ideas indicated an important transformation in the possible literary definition of reality and it is one that Barrie works with rather than against. Thomas Knowles argues that because Stevenson shunned realism, it is difficult to understand his 'exaggerated approval' of Barrie; a strange remark given that Knowles's principal

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8 Rider Haggard, 'About Fiction', 178-9
9 Ibid. 180
10 G, 66
11 Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Humble Remonstrance, 1884, repr. in *The Essays of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 365-75, pp. 367, 368, 375
12 Stevenson, 'A Note on Realism', 1883, ibid. 376-82, p. 377

thesis is that Barrie also distrusted realism (understood as naturalism).[13] However, it is not in his rural nostalgic, pastoral idyllic fiction that Barrie turns against realism - I have shown in chapter 3 that in one specific sense, at least, he was seen as being *very* realistic in this work. Barrie's retreat from realism took place not by means of escape to an idealised past, but by a complex interest in the construction of fictional reality itself.

THE LITTLE MINISTER: WRITING ROMANCE

Auld Licht Idylls (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1889) had been hailed as masterpieces of realism. *My Lady Nicotine* (1890), while not being negatively received, had largely been considered a minor deviation from the author's main path. The first really challenging text came in 1891. Although critical reaction to Barrie remained on the whole very positive, *The Little Minister* marks the beginning of a change in reviewers' responses. Given the orthodox opinion that this novel, more than any other, signalled Barrie's descent into sentiment, it seems incredible that W. J. Dawson could write one year after its appearance that Barrie 'is as stern a realist as Mr. Hardy in painting life as it is.'[14] But because of the emphasis placed on the idea that fiction should be drawn from an author's own personal observation, it was inevitable that Barrie was declared to be 'at his best when his foot is on the cobble-paving of Thrums and when confining himself to the actualities of his own experience.'[15] The introduction in *The Little Minister* of high society figures sparked a note of concern:

> Mr. Barrie is greatest among the humbler men and women of Thrums; these people he knows to the very core, while Lord Rintoul is a mere invention.[16]

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[13] K, 54
[14] Dawson, 'J. M. Barrie. A Character Sketch', 158
[15] Alexander M. Shand, 'The New Scotch Novelists', *Edinburgh Review*, 184 (July, 1896), 47
[16] Dawson, 'J. M. Barrie. A Character Sketch', 159

More significantly, reviews of this text show critics divided between applauding the kind of 'true realism' which had made *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums* such a success, and expressing reservation towards the character of the gypsy girl Babbie. Francis Adams regarded Babbie as 'inhuman,' and a 'mere circus caricature,' finding the book 'utterly wrong as a whole:'

> All it contains of any value whatever is to be found in the touches of the Thrums life in the style of the *Window*.[17]

The concern was over the mingling of realism and romance. Barrie had secured his niche in the realms of the 'probable' and it was a hard label to shake off:

> Mr. Barrie knows his own world well: when he goes beyond it he is groping for fancies in a Forfarshire mist. So it is that he spoiled his 'Little Minister' by gratuitously introducing the fantastic.[18]

It was not that fantasy as a genre was disrespected, just that Barrie was felt to be incapable of it: 'with a certain type of fiction, we at the outset bid our sense of the probable "begone!"' writes one commentator, 'but Barrie is not of the Rider Haggard type.'[19] Kenneth Graham notes that 'unnatural situations' is almost as frequent a term of abuse in criticism of the period as 'unnatural characters,'[20] and this explains why the *Spectator* found that the 'unnatural and improbable' love story between Gavin and the 'preposterous' Babbie 'jar[red] throughout with the realism of the rest of the book which is Mr. Barrie's true element.'[21] Barrie's generic identity had been established by *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums*, so that his attempts to move away from realist settings and realist plots met with disapproval:

> It is not that the plot, which is a daring and dramatic one to be laid in a Scotch village, is so strange, but that [Barrie] has managed to

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17 Francis Adams, 'Some Recent Novels', *Fortnightly Review*, 52 (July 1, 1892), 13-22, p.19
18 Shand, 'The New Scotch Novelists', 47-8
19 Butcher, 'The Fiction of Scottish Life and Character', 331
20 G, 25
21 *Spectator* (December 12, 1891), 848

> make probabilities seem improbable and possibilities impossible ... marring the faithfulness of his work.[22]

Nevertheless, most reviewers found the novel successful in spite of the collisions between realism and romance. William Wallace, in the *Academy*, argued that the power of the story made you forget the 'improbabilities and impossibilities'[23] and some reviews brought little reservation whatsoever: the *Times* saw it as 'possessing the unity and cohesion which were the only qualities wanting in his previous tales'[24] while the *Catholic World* found 'everything essential to a complete novel.'[25] It was, however, the criterion that had been established as defining Barrie's authorial identity which governed the approach most critics took. The scenes with Nanny Webster, for example, which were the ones most reminiscent of *A Window in Thrums* in their treatment of an old woman's departure for the poorhouse, were often declared to be the best.[26] Similarly, Dr. James Moffatt declared that 'it is the whimsical local colour which saves "The Little Minister" from becoming ordinary.'[27] Just how entrenched the idea of Barrie as a realist had become can be seen in the way that Andrew Lang, of all people, found the romance of this text to 'clash and to destroy the sense of reality, the capacity for believing in the narrative.' Lang, like most, considered that the 'strength of the book lies in the vigilant reporting' of life in Thrums.[28]

The Little Minister sets its tale of romance against a realist setting. The early chapters use a real life historical event, the 1839 Chartist uprising in Kirriemuir, in which to introduce the reader to both the community and the minister's role in it. Barrie went to pains to collect details of local colour, recording

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22 *Critic* (April 9, 1892), 207. See also *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, 84 (May, 1892), 967
23 William Wallace, 'New Novels', *Academy* (December 12, 1891), 532
24 *Times* (November 17, 1891), 12
25 *Catholic World*, 54 (March, 1892), 927
26 e.g. George Douglas, 'Mr. J. M. Barrie', *Good Words* (1899), 200-3 p.203; Shand, 'The New Scotch Novelists', 48
27 Moffatt, 'J. M. Barrie and His Books', 21
28 Andrew Lang, 'Mr. J. M. Barrie's "Little Minister"', *Illustrated London News* (December 5, 1891), 739

in his notebook, for example, 'Gas in 1838'; 'tea cost 6/-.'[29] Furthermore, contrary to the widespread idea that Barrie always wrote about Scotland through the distorted lens of an exile in London, *The Little Minister* was written whilst Barrie was in Scotland.[30] Indeed it seems from some of the letters he sent to friends in London that he found himself needing to stay in Kirriemuir for longer intervals than he first expected:

> It doesn't look as if I'd be back until pretty well in March. I'm a regular provincial and you will be studying me for a rustic character.[31]

> Yes, I'm here at present - getting up local colour for another Scotch story, and slaving in exemplary manner.[32]

> Am deep in *Good Words* stories & get scenic effects best on the spot. So decided not to come south yet.[33]

Clearly 'scenic effects' were important and when he wrote to Donald Macleod (the editor of *Good Words* where *The Little Minister* was serialised) outlining the plot of his novel, the first thing he drew attention to was the local historical context:

> The scene of the story is Thrums, a little weaving town up here of which I have written before. The action takes place in 1838, when Thrums had its first policeman and lamp-lighter - both of whom were stoned as innovations. Though radical in national politics the people were at this time so conservative in local matters that there was a grave war over the paving of the town. It was also the time of the weaver's riots, of smuggling, of gypsy encampments, all of which will be used for local colouring.[34]

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[29] Beinecke MS A2/9, A2/11

[30] For example, John Kennedy is factually wrong when he writes that 'Barrie had to go to England to learn the art of self-expression. He had to stand afar off and see things through a glass darkly... It was when he saw Kirriemuir from a distance and through English eyes that he realised it was quaint, that the home life there was sweet above all else, and its glens were bonny compared to English meadows.' *Thrums and the Barrie Country* (London, 1930), 6

[31] unpublished ALS to H.B. Marriot Watson, Kirriemuir (February 26, 1889), Beinecke

[32] unpublished ALS to Wellwood Anderson, Kirriemuir (October 25, 1889), Beinecke

[33] unpublished ALS to Marriot Watson, Kirriemuir (November 10, 1889), Berg Collection, New York Public Library

[34] unpublished ALS to Donald Macleod, Kirriemuir (January 1, 1889), National Library of Scotland

As Christopher Harvie has pointed out, however, Barrie's use of historical detail is synthetic in its design and deliberately unchronological.[35] Local colour did not necessarily mean factual accuracy. Andrew Lang attacked this liberty with historical accuracy[36] but most reviewers were largely impervious, probably because the scenes describing the riots are accompanied by close topographical detail and give a reasonable sense of an accurate time and place. But whilst this setting might lean towards realism, the course of the novel leads away from it. It is against this setting that Gavin Dishart, the minister, is plunged into the less historically and topographically verifiable Caddam Wood, a place which is deliberately set out as a land of fairy tale:

> Gavin took the path to Caddam, because Sanders told him the Wild Lindsays were there, a gypsy family that threatened the farmers by day and danced devilishly, it was said, at night. The Little Minister knew them by repute as a race of giants and that not many persons would have cared to face them alone at midnight, but he was feeling as one wound up to heavy duties, and meant to admonish them severely. (32)

Gavin endeavours to impose his own rigid and (he thinks) rational religious opinion on this world of the supernatural, but the wood serves as a territory which defamiliarises him and arouses emotions which in his public role as minister he has repressed: 'the mystery of the woods by moonlight thrilled the little minister' (34). It is in the wood where he first meets Babbie, the gypsy girl, with whom he is eventually to fall in love and play out a power struggle. Barrie's technique, however, is to explicitly frame the scene within myth and legend. Before he actually meets Babbie, Gavin is described as 'lost in the Caddam of past days' where he recalls the legend of the wood:

> how once on a time it was a mighty wood, and a maiden most beautiful stood on its confines, panting and afraid, for a wicked

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[35] Christopher Harvie, 'The Barrie Who Never Grew Up, An Apologia for *The Little Minister*', *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century*, ed. Horst W Drescher and Joachim Schwend (Frankfurt and Bern, 1985), 321-35, p. 326

[36] Lang, 'Mr. J. M. Barrie's "Little Minister"', op. cit.

> man pursued her; how he drew her near, and she ran a little way into the wood, and he followed her, and still she ran, and still he followed, until both were for ever lost (34)

The vocabulary of fairy tale is explicit here and the theme of the lost spirit will re-emerge in *Mary Rose*, *Peter Pan* and a number of the other plays. The legend mirrors what happens to Gavin on the very next page, where he chases Babbie meaning to denounce her, unaware of the parallels between his life and the legend he has just been recounting. There are similarities here with *Kidnapped* where David confronts his own romantic adventures by likening them to romance, ballad and folklore. The effect in *The Little Minister* of placing the love story explicitly within the idiom of legend and fairy tale, is to set up as a theme of the novel the interplay between fantasy and what is perceived as reality. But in this instance, what appears to Gavin as the world of legend - the world of Babbie and sex - is to emerge at the end of the novel as the world he will commit himself to and recognise as his reality. The romance setting is thus a deliberate technique used to enhance an underlying theme of the novel - an individual's perception of reality.

On one level *The Little Minister* is simply a work of popular romance and seems to offer little hope for critical investigation.[37] It has all the trappings of a piece of unintellectual pulp fiction designed to satisfy a vibrant market: Gavin Dishart, a pious, timid young minister becomes bewitched by a gypsy woman who, after she has successfully won his love, drops her disguise and emerges as really an aristocratic lady. But the story is also about a young man's acceptance of the reality of his sexual desires. At the start of the novel, Gavin is caught up in an acute complex about what he sees as his inadequate masculinity. He believes that his divine calling necessitates the repression of his sexual desires, is terribly insecure about his height and physical weakness, is fully aware that he is too obsessed with his mother and is absolutely petrified of women and men with beards. The course

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[37] One of Barrie's more sympathetic critics, Francis Russell Hart, judges it 'the least defensible of Barrie's major books.' *The Scottish Novel*, 129

of the novel, however, shows all these characteristics changing and by the end it is made clear that Gavin has acquired a sense of manhood when he is forced to realise that he desires Babbie and when he proves his own physical courage by rescuing from the flood her former fiancee Lord Rintoul. At the beginning of the novel, Gavin is convinced that it is his religious duty to bring Babbie out of the world of mystery in which she is surrounded: 'to his noble mind her mystery was only some misfortune, not of her making, and his was to be the part of leading her away from it into the happiness of the open life' (187). But the course of the plot shows Gavin himself gradually emerging into a different 'open life' and overcoming his one-dimensional approach to living. Babbie, in contrast to this one-dimensionality, is presented as a protean figure. She can alternate between English and Scots and apparently flit in and out of the landscape at will. She is portrayed as having the same power as Wendy, whose mind is likened to that of a Russian Doll at the beginning of *Peter and Wendy*, the prose version of *Peter Pan*:

> Her romantic mind was like the tiny boxes, one within the other, that come from the puzzling East, however many you discover there is always one more[38]

Babbie is very similar. She can, at one moment, appear like a child and give 'the appearance of one who was entirely in his hands,' (66) but really 'was a dozen women in the hour, and all made of impulses which would scarce stand still to be photographed' (186). It is this elusiveness which challenges the fixed determinates that make up Gavin's sense of reality:

> he had not decided which of two women she was. Hardly had he started on one line of thought when she crossed his vision in a new light, and drew him after her. (130)

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[38] *Peter and Wendy*, 1911, ed. Peter Hollindale (Oxford, 1991), 69. The Russian Doll idea is discussed briefly by R. D. S. Jack in 'Barrie and the Extreme Heroine', in Christopher Whyte (ed.), *Gendering the Nation* (Edinburgh, 1995), 137-67

The collision between romance and reality might have been what perturbed contemporary reviewers but it is an important part of the novel's theme. The tone of Babbie's quest to seduce Gavin is often playful and the novel as a whole sets up contrasts between games and reality. For example, having been captured by the police, a further power struggle is set up between Babbie and the forces of authority in the town, led by Captain Halliwell. Halliwell's attempts to interrogate her, and thereby discover the truth about the immediate cause of the riot, are confounded by his own sexual attraction to her: 'he knew she was seeking to beguile him, but he could not take his eye off hers' (60). The attempt to interrogate, to strike at the truth, becomes a game of wits which results in Babbie escaping from Halliwell's grasp.

Throughout the novel, Babbie's playful games destabilise the power of institutions like the court and church, but her myriad mindedness enables her to see when the game comes up against a harsh reality, as with the case of Micah Dow. In his capacity as minister, Gavin has managed to convince Rob Dow, one of the Auld Lichts, to give up drinking, and as a result Dow develops a protective streak for his minister. Convinced that Babbie is really the Devil trying to bewitch Gavin, he sets out to kill her, but failing to do so he returns to his drunken habits. It is at this stage that Babbie meets Rob Dow's young son Micah, whose experiences bring home to her the harsh reality of the situation. Crucially, Barrie again frames the scene within a context of play and fantasy. Babbie comes across Micah sitting astride the Standing Stone, which we are told is the place where 'children often sit and muse until they see gay ladies riding by on palfreys ... and knights in glittering armour, and goblins, and fiery dragons...' (190). This is the land of play and imagination, but this boy is cruelly caught in reality. The scene which follows, where Micah explains how his mother is dead, how his father beats him whenever he is drunk, and where he offers Babbie the gift of both of his rabbits if she will leave Thrums, is far from being simply for tear-jerking effect. As Christopher

Harvie has suggested, Micah provides a 'child's challenge' to Babbie, which enforces her to mature into adulthood[39] and thus look upon her pursuit of Gavin not simply as a game, but as evidence of how the game has clashed with reality.

Whilst the story of Gavin and Babbie is very much about understanding reality, the novel is also concerned with the construction of fictional reality. The story of the little minister is framed in *The Little Minister* as one of myth and legend. In the final chapter the narrator, Gavin Ogilvy the dominie, relates how the story which he has told has been re-enacted through time:

> My scholars have a game they call "The Little Minister," in which the boys allow the girls as a treat to join. Some of the characters in the real drama are omitted as of no importance - the dominie, for instance - (335).

This framing of the story in legend serves to emphasise that the text *The Little Minister* is as much about the construction of stories and legends as it is the actual story of Gavin and Babbie. Furthermore, it should encourage us to look on the act of narration as more than just a transparent medium. But the omission of Ogilvy from the community's re-enacting of the story is fitting, because it is characteristic of what actually happened with criticism of *The Little Minister*. In contemporary reviews the narrator is hardly mentioned, and when he is it is usually to be dismissed: he is 'too obviously a mere after-thought.'[40] In his 1929 book on Barrie, F. J. Harvey Darton considers Gavin Ogilvy 'a bore and a hindrance to the story. He enters into the action of the tale, but he need not have been made to tell it.'[41] It is, however, crucial to Barrie's exploration of male sexuality and its relation to the figure of the artist that Ogilvy does tell the story. In this novel the personality and biases of the narrator are as important as the story he is telling.

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[39] Harvie, 'The Barrie Who Never Grew Up', 331
[40] [William Wallace], 'Scottish Fiction of To-day', 45
[41] F. J. Harvey Darton, *J. M. Barrie* (London, 1929), 43

The reviewer who dismissed the narrator as a 'mere after-thought' was, in fact, correct in one sense; the narrator as he stands was a relatively late idea. Barrie had been gathering ideas for the book before even *Auld Licht Idylls* had been published. One of his working notebooks dated 11/5/88 is titled 'Gavin Ogilvy - a novel'[42] and contains the early plans for *The Little Minister*. Barrie originally planned to call the little minister Gavin Ogilvy and only introduced the name Dishart after he had been working on the novel for nearly two years. It is not until a notebook probably compiled in 1889 that we find a reference to the narrator: 'Writer of the book the dominie who married Margaret.'[43] With Ogilvy set aside as the name for the minister, the notebook shows Barrie intending first to call the dominie Dishart and then Whammond. Eventually, however, he decided to swap the names over, Gavin Dishart became the minister and Gavin Ogilvy the dominie-narrator. These name changes are more than just cosmetic because Gavin Ogilvy had been the pseudonym Barrie used in the portion of his early journalism that was published in the *British Weekly*. There is a sense, therefore, of the narrator being constructed out of both the character of the minister Barrie had built up in his plans, and of Barrie himself. Criticism has always been quick to read Barrie's work as straightforward autobiography but the way in which aspects of Barrie's personality often found its way into not one but a multitude of his characters within any one work makes such a strategy restricting. In fact, as I will show, his working notebooks indicate how during the composition of *The Little Minister* he consciously divided autobiographical characteristics up among the male characters. In this chapter I have refrained from making any biographical analysis, largely because the interplay of Barrie's work with his life has been presented in just about as objective a manner as possible by Andrew Birkin.[44]

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[42] Beinecke MS A2/9
[43] Beinecke MS A2/10
[44] Andrew Birkin, *J.M. Barrie & the Lost Boys* (London, 1979)

As he was finally moulded, the narrator of *The Little Minister* does not simply tell the story; he has an important role in it. It emerges that he is really Gavin Dishart's father having once been bigamously married to Margaret Dishart.[45] Ogilvy's telling of the story of Gavin Dishart is thus filled with biases and vested interests and I shall go on to discuss in some detail how I believe these contribute to the overall structure and impression of the book. First I want to show how Ogilvy presents himself as a conscious artist, because the decision to create a greater role for the narrator indicates a turning point in Barrie's fiction away from the relatively neutral presentation of an idealised past found in the *Auld Licht* stories towards what would become in later novels a sophisticated, complex interest in the relationship between art and life. From this moment on, Barrie becomes increasingly interested in the mind which creates fiction.

It is worth noting in passing that Barrie presents Ogilvy as a specifically Scottish artist grappling with the dissociation of linguistic sensibility identified by Edwin Muir. He notes that 'I have taught the English language all my life, and I try to write it, but everything I say in this book I think first to myself in the Doric (11). More importantly, Ogilvy repeatedly draws attention to his narrative as artifice and sometimes anticipates an implied female audience for his story: 'The Egyptian's arms clasped her, and the Egyptian kissed a sallow cheek that had once been as fair as yours, madam, who may read this story' (105). But the love story is not presented to the reader in an unadulterated fashion. At the very beginning of his story Ogilvy worries over whether his narrative will be believed:

> A ghost-show used to come yearly to Thrums on the merry Muckle Friday, in which the illusion was contrived by hanging a glass between the onlookers and the stage. I cannot deny that the comings and goings of the ghost were highly diverting, yet the farmer of T'nowhead only laughed because he had paid his money at the hole in the door like the rest of us. T'nowhead sat at the end of a form where he saw round the glass and so saw no ghost. I fear

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[45] For clarity, Gavin Dishart will hereafter be referred to as 'Gavin' and Gavin Ogilvy as 'Ogilvy'.

> my public may be in the same predicament ... I do not know that I can provide the glass for others. If they see round it they will neither laugh nor cry with Gavin and Babbie. (3)

Ogilvy makes it clear that he is in part compiling the story from local legend and gossip and further explains that the reason why he first wrote Gavin's love story was as a gift to his young granddaughter, Gavin and Babbie's daughter. The story is thus set up as a kind of oral legend which is being passed down through generations and, significantly, being changed or contested along the way. Ogilvy tells us that on some points of the plot he and his granddaughter are in disagreement: 'Long before I had any thought of writing this story, I had told it so often to my little maid that she now knows some of it better than I' (159). What is suggested is the kind of fluid, constantly re-told and re-structured story which Barrie claimed was the principal artistic aim of the Peter Pan myth.[46]

In the serialised version of the book, the granddaughter is given a name - Margaret the Second - and cast as an editor of Ogilvy's manuscript. She contributes a number of foot-notes which provide an external perspective on Ogilvy's character and which, significantly, identify him as a conscious artist with a creed exactly similar to the one Barrie would ascribe to his next fictional artist, Tommy Sandys. Ogilvy instructs his editor not to alter his manuscripts:

> I needed no such instructions, but if I asked him why he thought I could dare to criticise such beautiful books he smiled sadly, patting my cheek, and saying that beautiful books only come from great factories, while his were woven at a hand-loom. Yet he confessed his fear that, even though I did not insert notes of exclamation (which he called the hairpins of literature), I might marry (than which there was then nothing more improbable, though the strangest thing has happened since) a man who did not know the right word when he saw it. "That, I take it," he said, "would be the greatest disaster that could befell a woman, and it might also lead to the mangling of my manuscripts, in which I have got the right

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46 see R.D.S. Jack, *The Road to the Never Land: A Reassessment of J.M. Barrie's Dramatic Art* (Aberdeen, 1989) chp. 4

> word but seldom; for though to get it is the sweetest thing in life, it is as difficult to hit as a squirrel."[47]

The analogy of hitting a squirrel is repeated by Tommy in *Sentimental Tommy* (439), and the concentration on textuality and the construction of reality by the artistic mind, with which Barrie was becoming increasingly preoccupied, shows how his fiction can be seen to take the side of Henry James in the debates taking place in the 1880s and 90s over the art of fiction. It is in these much wider terms of discussion that we must place Barrie's fiction; lifting him out of the critical Kailyard into the wider context of the English-language novel in the late nineteenth-century.

The issue of the creative mind is what differentiates James's essay 'The Art of Fiction' from that of Walter Besant, against whom it was written in response. James's underlying objection to Besant was the latter's prioritising of the sensibilities of the reader. To James, 'the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer.'[48] The publication of Anthony Trollope's *An Autobiography* in 1883 had given unintended sustenance to the impression that mid-Victorian ideas about the art of the novel were outdated and should be ridiculed. The image of the novelist which Trollope constructed when he likened himself to a tortoise in his methodical approach to writing fiction, counting every word as he went to ensure he had met his daily requirement, indicated how the creative mind, with its indiscriminate turns of inspiration, was seen as having been lost in the wake of the professionalisation and commodification of fiction. Trollope was also at pains to point out, in a memorable phrase, that 'I do believe that no girl has risen from the reading of my pages less modest than she was before.'[49] Mid-century ideas of the novel did not entirely subordinate the importance of the mind of the producer to this excessive focus on the sensibilities

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[47] 'The Little Minister', serial version, *Good Words* (1891), 53n

[48] Henry James, 'The Art of Fiction', 1884, repr. *Victorian Criticism of the Novel*, 193-212, p. 211

[49] Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography*, 1883, ed. Michael Sadleir et al. (Oxford, 1980), 146

of the reader - the test of a good novel was often considered to be how successfully its author ordered the material which had been drawn from his own experience and moulded it into something pleasing. What was to happen towards the end of the century, however, was for greater importance to be attached to the act of ordering. For some time, critics of the novel had been pleading for the significance of the subjective artist. An article in the *Westminster* in 1873 complained that 'our painting is mere photography, and our descriptive writing is mere topography. Mind is not seen. The play and grace of imagination are lost.'[50] This stance received strong backing in the response to naturalism, which methodologically aimed at an objective, scientific approach to the art of fiction, thus neutralising the role of the novelist. Hall Caine, for example, felt that the 'Zola manifesto,' with its banishing of 'all incidents that are out of the common,' had confused the 'function of the novelist with that of the historian;' the naturalist was only interested in leaving behind a record of facts, whereas the true novelist used facts only 'as a help towards the display of a passion.' To Caine, 'art should be adjudged by the good use' the novelist makes of reality, 'not by the display of it.'[51] Inevitably, therefore, theories of the novel placed increasing emphasis on the subjective artist, and accordingly the artist figure (of which Barrie's Gavin Ogilvy and Tommy Sandys are examples) came to be a recurrent character in fiction of the 1890s. Barrie was to concentrate in his fiction on presenting artist-figures who grappled with the very questions of how to represent reality that other novelists, such as James, were doing in their prefaces and critical essays.

If *The Little Minister* was first conceived as a conventional Romance story, it turned into something more ambitious: a small-scale but by no means unsuccessful attempt at analysis of the creative process itself. By introducing the artist-narrator into his design Barrie altered the whole impression of the book. *The*

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[50] Quoted in G, 35
[51] Caine, 'The New Watchwords of Fiction', 482, 484

Little Minister was no longer simply a love story; instead it became an analysis of a mind which tries to create a love story. Lynette Hunter has argued that 'the narrator is given the pre-requisites of a fantasist which depend upon the power to create one's own world and control it absolutely.' This, she argues, enables the reader to be 'convinced of the narrator's honesty and objectivity.'[52] It is certainly true that the narrator (unlike that of *The Little White Bird*) succeeds in convincing us of the reality of his story, even though, as I have stated, he stresses its artifice. What serves to undermine the objectivity of what he says, however, and to encourage the reader to concentrate more on the complexities of his character, is his own involvement in the plot. In this sense the novel is more in line with what Douglas Gifford has called 'the Scottish tradition of self-revealing, unintentionally self-satiric monologue;'[53] it is also the germ of the theme which lies at the very centre of Barrie's fiction - the relationship between sexuality and creativity. This is a theme which we are unable to accommodate if we think only in terms of the 'Kailyard'. In *The Little Minister*, Ogilvy's identification of himself as an artist is linked to the way his role as narrator allows the text to perform a debate on the nature of masculinity. As the novel emerged from Barrie's working notes and plans, emphasis was increasingly placed on the way the narrator responded to the love story he was telling. Initially his role was to be largely neutral but it became much more important as Barrie strove to resolve the confusions he had regarding the sexuality of his hero - Gavin Dishart.

Even at this early stage in his career, questions of sexuality and gender were deeply set in Barrie's mind and writing, and a brief detour into his journalism is required to establish some important contexts for *The Little Minister*. Barrie's journalism contains a wealth of neglected material and gender issues are far more

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[52] Lynette Hunter, 'J.M. Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 5, 1 (1978), 39-52

[53] Douglas Gifford, 'Stevenson and Scottish Fiction,' 79

recurrent thematically than Scotland or Scottish life. R.D.S. Jack has drawn attention to the way Barrie supported the women's rights movement in the pages of the *Nottingham Journal*;[54] elsewhere in his work on that newspaper lie more curious and idiosyncratic interests. Articles on 'Male Nursery Maids' and 'Pretty Boys' reflect his interest in inverting gender stereotypes[55] but he goes one step further in an article called 'The Third Sex', which was later to be the title of a series of pieces published in the *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*.[56] These were about actors and actresses whom Barrie humorously projected as such singular, alien creatures that they stood outside the binary domain of men and women. His use of the term 'Third Sex' is more than mere novelty, however, because the same phrase had been used in 1869 by the sexologist Friederich Ulrichs to denote 'Urnings', the name Ulrichs gave to what he termed as the class of individuals who experienced 'Uranian' - same-sex - desire.[57] Barrie's use of the phrase suggests an awareness of contemporary debates in sexuality, and in particular the way sexuality was becoming understood, as Foucault has put it, 'less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of sexual sensibility.'[58] In Barrie's articles, actors are 'The Third Sex' on account of the kind of people they are not the kind of things they do. As I will show to be the case with the *Tommy* novels, Barrie's journalism reflects an interest in the way ideas about male sexuality impinged upon identity and subjectivity.

Elsewhere in the *Dispatch*, marriage, bachelorhood and male desire were discussed regularly and ambiguously. Marriage is frequently presented as the ultimate disaster that can befall a man. One bachelor has a recurrent nightmare:

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[54] Jack, 'Barrie and the Extreme Heroine', 137-8
[55] 'Male Nursery Maids', *Nottingham Journal* (March 28, 1883); 'Pretty Boys' (January 28, 1884)
[56] 'The Third Sex', *Nottingham Journal* (September 3, 1883), *Edinburgh Evening Dispatch*, (March 26, 1887; April 9, 1887; April 23, 1887; May 7, 1887; May 21, 1887; June 4, 1887)
[57] see Joseph Bristow, *Sexuality* (London, 1997), 21
[58] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 1976, trans. Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth, 1981), 43

'Always I see myself being married, and then I wake up with the scream of a lost soul, clammy and shivering.'[59] This particular idea - probably autobiographical as it is recorded in Barrie's personal notebooks[60] - is applied to the hero of *Tommy and Grizel* as well (35). In another article marriage is humorously associated with the sentiments of death and grief:

> George, poor fellow! got engaged a few weeks ago, and already he is lost to his friends. The thing leaked out gradually but we had all too much good feeling to talk about it in his presence ... It was very sudden. He had been in his usual state of health on the previous day and had spoken brightly of his prospects as if he viewed the future without misgivings. When I left him in the afternoon it never struck me that anything was wrong ... I shuddered to think that it might have been myself ... a text came into my mind. It was "In the midst of life we are in death."[61]

In this piece, marriage is presented as invading the pleasures of male homosocial bonding: 'we were to take a tour in Ireland', the narrator continues, but now, 'instead of being with me in Ireland, George would be with *her*,' (original emphasis). But Barrie presents the bachelor as someone who is always faced with a social compulsion to reject male-male identification and pursue heterosexuality. One article features a bachelor who talks to a young lady 'whilst looking longingly at a man and sighing.'[62] Others show a 'prig', who reflects on why ladies don't like him and tries to convince himself that he doesn't care,'[63] and a bachelor, desperate to get married, who reads 'lady writers of fiction' to find out how to propose.[64] In 'The Stupid Sex', Barrie adopts the persona of a woman discussing men, and puts a view of bachelors which confirms the ambiguous feelings he was expressing in these pieces towards marriage and sexual desire:

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59 'My Ghastly Dream. A Distressing Story', *Dispatch* (September 21, 1887)
60 cited by Birkin, *J.M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, 28
61 'Married and Done For. Poor George's Last Days. By a Confirmed Bachelor', *Dispatch* (June 11, 1887)
62 'A Ladies Man; or, the pursuit of sentiment', *Dispatch* (September 17, 1887)
63 'Why Ladies Don't Like Me: the Reflections of a Prig', *Dispatch* (May 19, 1888)
64 'Popping the Question', *Dispatch* (May 14, 1887)

> Those poor creatures, confirmed bachelors (*i.e.* to say, men who can't get a girl to look at them) pretend to pity married men who have to travel with their family, instead of in a smoking carriage. That, of course, is only the bachelor's jealousy.[65]

In one of Barrie's least considered works this whole idea of transition from male-male bonding to accepting the normative social role of marriage is central. *My Lady Nicotine* (1890) was an edited compilation of articles which Barrie had previously published in various newspapers and periodicals. They tell of the adventures of a man's final days as a smoking bachelor. The narrator is on the point of marriage, and the prospects of giving up smoking are really the prospects of leaving behind the homosocial world of bachelor-bonding. Marriage and married men are seen as infringing on the homosocial exclusivity of the men who, with the narrator, smoke the Arcadia mixture. Smoking emerges as both a substitute for sexual desire - 'love for a pipe is very like love for a woman' (38) - and as an agent ridding the condition of desiring women altogether: 'after I smoked the Arcadia', the narrator remarks, 'the desire to pay ladies compliments went from me' (30). At the end of the book we see the narrator in his married state but still clinging to the homosocial routines of a male fraternity as he simulates smoking by chewing on a briar whilst listening to the sound of his neighbour tapping his pipe through the wall; only after his neighbour has said good night with the final tap of his pipe does he join his wife in bed.

The 1890s is well documented as an age of bachelors and of male Clubs, whose licensed male bonding existed in an acutely tense relation with the ambiguities of sexual desire.[66] In a later novel, *The Little White Bird*, Barrie was to place a bachelor clubman at the centre of his story. Peter Gay has noted that the fears of the men who sought refuge in such clubs were 'fears not of being castrated but of being compelled to grow up, of having to abandon persistent adolescent ties

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[65] 'The Stupid Sex', *Dispatch* (July 23, 1887)
[66] Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the* Fin de Siecle (London, 1991)

with their distinctly, though largely unconscious, homoerotic pleasures.'[67] In other words, dismissing the male-male identification with its uncomfortably blurred distinction between homosocial and homosexual was a necessary activity if the male wished to embrace the normative sexual role of desiring the female. *My Lady Nicotine* is a text which expresses these contemporary concerns by dramatising not just male homosocial bonding but the ambiguities of male *sexual* desire as well. Although the members of the smoking fraternity are always seeking to strengthen their male-only bond - they gradually move to living as near as possible to each other - there is a continual ambiguous engagement with desire for women. In one story Gilray purchases a rose for a woman he admires but shies away from approaching her with it and uses it as a pipe-cleaner instead. A more fascinating figure is Marriot, who is described as 'our sentimental member' and from whose succession of failed romances the narrator desperately tries to escape - pretending to have fallen asleep whilst being forced to listen to them. In one chapter these patterns take an extraordinary turn. The narrator has locked himself in his bedroom to try and avoid exposure to another tale of male sexual desire, but in this instance Marriot is at pains to point out that his story is not 'a love affair - at least not exactly' (209). But his story is very much about desire. On being shown an old school photograph Marriot is aroused by the face of a beautiful girl whose identity he cannot recall. On re-telling this story he is at pains to point out that he did not fall in love with the face: 'it was not, I think, that kind of attraction' (210). The reason becomes clear when it emerges at the end of the story that the beautiful young girl whom he thought he recognised in the photo is presented to him as she now is - 'a very short, very fat, smooth-faced man' (215). The fear of the ambiguity of male sexual desire is illustrated here not just in the figure of Marriot at pains to understand his own sexual drives, but also in the narrator himself, lying in his bed trying to avoid listening whilst Marriot flicks cigarette-ash on his pillow.

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[67] Peter Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience: Victoria to Freud: Volume 1, The Education of the Senses* (New York, 1984), 288

It was themes like these which were filling Barrie's mind as he constructed *The Little Minister*, and as the work took shape gender and sexuality became more central to the work. For much of the time when he was drafting the novel, Barrie was unable to decide between two possible endings to his love story. His uncertainty is recorded in the letter he wrote to Norman Macleod, the editor of *Good Words*, outlining the intended theme and plot:

> I have not decided between two ways of ending the story. The one is tragic, the love affair ending unhappily and the minister being preached out of his church by the old minister. In that case the hero would have been misunderstood by his stern congregation. He would die among the hills in what is still remembered in these parts as the three days rain. With the happy ending the hero and heroine after severe trials would get married. In this case I see two or three chapters after the marriage, in which the minister by strength of character and by the force of love makes an admirable Auld Licht out of his wife.[68]

The second alternative would have given the power struggle between Gavin and Babbie an extra dimension and there are numerous entries in Barrie's working notebooks which show that if he had settled on that ending the text would have raised some important issues of gender politics:

- If happy ending G proves stronger - she admires little man's courage - he controls her after marriage (two or three last chapters showing how he did this)
- Hag says G's triumph over B asserts supremacy of man again (end)
- get married over tongs - taking her agst her will. Yet thus captivating her, as she needs a man to subdue her
- Wherein B's courage and G's courage differed - then she has to cling to him[69]

This conclusion, which would seem to assert Gavin's power over Babbie, was abandoned in favour of keeping the issue unresolved. In the published text it remains a point of conjecture as to whether Gavin or Babbie will in future hold the power in the relationship. On one level the issue seems clear cut: as I have already

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[68] unpublished ALS to Donald Macleod, op. cit.
[69] Beinecke MS A2/9, A2/10

described, the presentation of Babbie as a protean figure places her firmly in control. Gavin's attempts to repress his sexual desire by identifying her as a tempter and embarking on a series of sermons against women are eventually broken down by Babbie. At key points in the narrative she leads him away from his public duty and even contrives to involve him in the weaver's riot and to acknowledge her as his wife in public. But the balance of power is never absolutely clear. For one thing Babbie herself suggests she likes to be controlled. In an important scene which continues the playful tone of their relationship, Babbie has positioned herself in a tree where, unnoticed at first, she speaks down to Gavin, taunting and teasing him, trying to get him to admit that he loves her. In the exchange which ensues he for the first time openly declares his admiration for her, but Babbie's strategy is to paradoxically appeal to *his* desire for dominance: she controls his emotions so far as to get him to admit that he loves her but only by simultaneously positing that he has (or should have) power over her:

> "The man I could love," Babbie went on, not heeding him, almost forgetting that he was there, "must not spend his days in idleness as the men I know do."
> "I do not."
> "He must be brave, no mere worker among others, but a leader of men."
> "All ministers are."
> "Who makes his influence felt."
> "Assuredly."
> "And take the side of the weak against the strong even though the strong be in the right."
> "Always my tendency."
> "A man who has a mind of his own, and having once made it up stands to it in defiance even of---"
> "Of his session."
> "Of the world. He must understand me."
> "I do."
> "And be my master."
> "It is his lawful position in the house."
> "He must not yield to my coaxing or tempers."
> "It would be a weakness."
> "But compel me to do his bidding; yes, even thrash me if---"
> "If you won't listen to reason. Babbie," cried Gavin, "I am that man!"
>
> (157-8)

The idea presented here is what was to become the central thesis behind the play *What Every Woman Knows*: that women will always have control over men so long as men believe that they (men) have the upper hand. As the narrator says elsewhere 'she had the appearance of one who was entirely in his hands' (66). But such is Barrie's deliberate ambiguity, it remains possible to interpret both this passage and *What Every Woman Knows* as either revolutionary or reactionary, a conclusion which can be reached over *The Admirable Crichton* as well.

The theme of a later novel, *Tommy and Grizel* (1900) was, in a simplistic sense, to be the archetypal one of the clash between creative man and domestic woman. Barrie was a great believer in the domestic qualities of women, but he saw these as empowering qualities to which men were uncontrollably submissive, and in a later notebook he even wrote 'men are really more domesticated by nature than women.'[70] In *The Little Minister* Barrie planned to show Gavin controlled by Babbie's powers of domesticity:

- Babbie dressing up Gavin. Elders see it when come to see why he is late for meeting
- Gavin cd denounce Babbie before congregation for denouncing him - this please them (middle of book) He gets under yoke again (this cd be after dressing him up)[71]

It is as a result of these domestic powers that the narrator of the book is led to make assessments like 'Woman is not undeveloped man, but something better' (105) and 'At twenty-one a man is a musical instrument given to the other sex' (125). The treatment seems to turn on an obvious attraction towards the idea of men as unrestrained and free but ultimately under the influence of female domesticity:

- man turning up after supposed dead and buried - mild surprise of wife who

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[70] Beinecke MS A2/12
[71] Beinecke MS A2/9

sorry iron not hot enough to iron dicky for him[72]

It seems from the notebooks that Barrie wanted to create a character who would embody wild, unrestrained masculine characteristics to act as a contrast to Gavin, and before he had settled on Ogilvy as Gavin's father, the father was going to be brought into the plot and portrayed as a helpless drunk. Early on in his notes Barrie wrote 'his father drunk - something abt this at beginning - supposed to be hereditary,'[73] and there are an abundance of other notes showing how Barrie tried to work out drink as a central theme - a theme which would have altered the whole tone of the novel. The drunken father eventually split into two characters: Adam Dishart and Rob Dow, the latter performing only a secondary function in the plot.

Having centred his story around a minister acutely anxious about what he saw as his inadequate masculinity, Barrie entertained various possibilities of how to develop the story. The plan was always to present Gavin as struggling with his self-imposed repression, and this is eventually what the story came to be about; but early on Barrie was unclear about how best to resolve Gavin's crisis of masculinity: should the novel be about the depths and pains of sexual repression (as *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* was later to be) or a more conventional skit about love conquering all? Should Gavin be presented as an impotent masculine failure or should he somehow acquire 'magerful' characteristics along the way? The notebooks show the confusing range of options he contemplated:

- First Gavin is all love for Babbie. how feels after thinks she is bad - wants to be good himself if she is really good but feels a certain pleasure in consorting with her if she is bad
- Gavin continues to make love to B after knows of engagement. but passion now - she is ready to marry him, but in reality he doesn't want that
- G flings B over cliff (?) in passion - this might make her love him

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72 Beinecke MS A2/9
73 Beinecke MS A2/9

- After Gavin thinks got feelings under control, it comes suddenly and irresistibly - until other time quite hopeless. It must spend itself - then sees her before him - lives at this time with fearful intensity.[74]

In the published text there is considerable emphasis on Gavin's struggle to reconcile his private sexual desires for a gypsy with his public role as austere minister. The 'fearful intensity,' however, doesn't ever really come through, and this is largely because unlike the Rev. Adam Yestreen in *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan*, Gavin is not narrating the story and is therefore presented from the outside. We never see the emotional turbulence of his sexual self. Instead this turbulence and 'fearful intensity', or at least something like it, was shifted onto the narrator. What it seems Barrie did was to take some of the characteristics he had initially applied to Gavin and set up competing masculinities. The timidity and apparent sexlessness of Gavin was shifted onto Ogilvy, and the introduction of Adam Dishart as a further masculine type allowed Barrie to shelve any plan of having Gavin turn into a domineering, physically masterful husband. Gavin became instead a kind of counter-romance hero: a timid, somewhat submissive young man, whose masculine characteristics were nevertheless presented, in contrast to Adam and Ogilvy, as positive. But the changes shifted much of the emphasis of the novel onto the narrator; he became the most complex of the three competing male types.

Within the first few pages of the book, when he is recounting Gavin's history, Ogilvy immediately lays bare his anxieties, presenting himself in contrast to Adam Dishart as a masculine failure:

> To me his roars of laughter without cause were as repellent as a boy's drum; yet many faces that were long in my company brightened at his coming, and women, with whom, despite my learning, I was in no wise a favourite, ran to their doors to listen to him as readily as the bell-man. [...] before both sexes he boasted that any woman would take him for his beard alone. Of this beard he took prodigious care, though otherwise thinking little of his

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[74] Beinecke MS A2/9

> appearance, and I now see that he understood women better than I did, who had nevertheless reflected much about them (7).

Ogilvy aspires to the masculine characteristics of Adam which he himself lacks and which he thinks most appeal to women. Adam is what Barrie calls elsewhere a 'magerful man,' a type of masculinity that he was clearly both attracted to and repelled by. A 'magerful man' was, as his name suggests, a man with a strong physical presence and a powering control over women.[75] Having won Margaret from Ogilvy in the first instance, Adam marries her but soon disappears believed drowned at sea. The disappearance is, however, a deception, allowing him to live a life of freedom away from his wife, and the potentially domineering domesticity she holds over him, and return only when he chooses. Ogilvy now marries Margaret believing her to be a widow. But he remains haunted by his failure to acquire Margaret in the homosocial contest, believing himself incapable of expressing conventional masculine traits. When Adam unexpectedly returns, Ogilvy completely gives in to this 'magerful man' and allows him to assume his place not only as husband but as father to Gavin as well:

> "'Here's a go,' Adam muttered, and scratched his head. Then he slapped his thigh. 'Gavin,' he said in his friendliest way, 'we'll toss for him.'
> "He pulled the knife that is now in my desk from his pocket, spat on it, and flung it up. 'Dry, the kid's ours, Meggy,' he explained; 'wet, he goes to Gavin.' I clenched my fist to---- But what was the use? He caught the knife, and showed it to me.
> "'Dry,' he said triumphantly; 'so he is ours, Meggy ...
> I went away and left them, and I never saw Margaret again (277).

Throughout the text Ogilvy holds up the 'magerful man' as a barometer of successful and desirable masculinity - 'I prayed to God for a little of the mettle of other men' (284) - and his personal history governs the way that he tells the story of Gavin and Babbie so that his own ideas on masculinity provide a critical contrast to Gavin's gradual acceptance of his own sexual desires. At the beginning of the

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[75] The magerful man is the description used for Tommy's father in *Sentimental Tommy*, but the character himself does not appear in the novel.

story Gavin has recently moved with his mother to Thrums to become Auld Licht minister. Adam Dishart is now long since dead but Gavin has been brought up to believe that Adam was his father. Ogilvy, who is now schoolmaster in the nearby glen, is suddenly confronted with the past. He is desperate to avoid meeting Margaret, Gavin's mother and his former wife, justifying his decision to remain imprisoned in his schoolhouse - to which he confines himself for much of the duration of the novel - by believing that he is protecting her from pain. As the plot unfolds, however, it emerges that Ogilvy is always self-seeking and always running away from his own crisis of masculinity. Desperate to avoid confronting Margaret he tries to prevent Gavin and Babbie coming together: 'What could I do to keep Gavin and the woman apart' (197) he innocently asks the reader.

> My anxiety about Gavin came back to me until I was like a man imprisoned between walls of his own building ... I know I sat for some hours now seeing Gavin pay the penalty of marrying the Egyptian, and again drifting back to my days with Margaret, until the wind took to playing tricks with me, so that I heard Adam Dishart enter our home by the sea every time the school-house door shook (206).

Haunted by the presence of Margaret in the same village and the spectre of Adam Dishart, Ogilvy allows his obsession with his failed masculinity to prevent him from assuming a fatherly position towards Gavin. The extent of his obsession is brought home in an episode where Gavin is reported dead:

> In the Egyptian's eyes, I suppose, was a picture of Gavin lying dead; but if her grief had killed her thinking faculties, mine that was only less keen because I had been struck down once before, had set all the wheels of my brain in action. For it seemed to me that the hour had come when I must disclose myself to Margaret ... The time for such action had come. Gavin's death had struck me hard, but it did not crush me. I was not unprepared. I was going to Margaret now. (210)

Ogilvy receives the news of his son's supposed death with a fearful glance at his agonised sexual self, proving himself entirely empty of any fatherly capacity. He is a portrait of obsession and repression, and as such is an earlier version of Rev.

Adam Yestreen in *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan*. There are persistent hints at a dark side to his character (he beats his pupils) and at the end of the novel he leaves us not with a final triumphant look at his happily married son - surely the end of a conventional romance story - but with a resounding reminder of his persistent, unbroken, gender-induced anxieties:

> Only one bitterness remains. When I found Gavin in the rain, when I was fighting my way through the flood, when I saw how the hearts of the people were turned against him - above all, when I found Whamond in the manse - I cried to God, making promises to Him if He would spare the lad *for Margaret's sake*, and He spared him; but these promises I have not kept. (340, emphasis added).

When viewed from the perspective of masculinity and when the subtleties of narrative discourse are taken into account, Barrie's seemingly rambling love story emerges as structurally coherent. The handling of plot has easily been the chief target in criticism and there are certainly weaknesses. The story drifts into melodrama with Babbie being kidnapped by Rob Dow before eventually being married to Gavin in a gypsy wedding 'over the tongs'. Torrential rain causes the entire landscape to be dissolved in floods (the notebooks show that Barrie had particular difficulty in sorting out the plot mechanics of the flood scenes), and it is in the midst of the flood that the Dominie finally tells his story to Gavin and reveals himself as his father. Whilst trying to rescue Babbie from her kidnapper, Gavin has nearly drowned and has reluctantly sought refuge with Ogilvy in the schoolhouse. Given Barrie's associations as a sentimental writer, the opportunity surely existed here for a tearful recognition scene. But it is absolutely consistent with the course of the novel that this does not happen. As Ogilvy relates the telling of his story to Gavin he provides a commentary for the reader, pointing out: 'This was my whole story, and here was I telling it to my son, and not a tear between us. It ended abruptly, and I fell to mending the fire' (271). Having completed his story the dominie reports Gavin's response:

> Here was a nauseous draught for me. Having finished my tale, I turned to Gavin for sympathy; and, behold, he had been listening for the cannon instead of to my final words.

Ogilvy's story teaches what Gavin has already learned, he has no need to listen; as he tells Ogilvy himself, 'have you forgotten that all this tragedy you have told me of only grew out of your own indecision? I took the chance that you let slip by' (280).

The explicit contrast between father and son makes it unsurprising that Ogilvy shows a somewhat muted response to the triumphant story of Gavin which he is telling. Gavin's happiness and success serve only to heighten his own fear and depression. He alone questions Gavin's courage in jumping into the flooded ravine to save Lord Rintoul:

> The Little Minister's jump is always spoken of as a brave act in the glen, but at such times I am silent. This is not because, being timid myself, I am without admiration for courage. My little maid says that three in every four of my poems are to the praise of prowess ... Of the two kinds of courage, however, he did not then show the nobler. I am glad that he was ready for such an act, but he should have remembered Margaret and Babbie. As it was, he may be said to have forced them to have jumped with them. Not to attempt a gallant deed for which one has the impulse may be braver than the doing of it. (323-4)

It is a desperate attempt to intellectualise Gavin out of his glory, and it is significant that Ogilvy should relate that three quarters of his poems are in praise of prowess (and that he should seemingly be unaware of this), because throughout the book his self-perceived sexual inadequacy is explicitly correlated with his desire for artistic potency. He recalls how he had first given up Margaret to Adam:

> though Adam was always saying and doing the things I was making up my mind to say and do, I think Margaret cared more for me. Nevertheless, there was something about him that all women seemed to find loveable, a dash that made them send him away and then well-nigh run after him. At any rate, I could have got her after her mother's death if I had been half a man. But I went back to Aberdeen to write a poem about her, and while I was at it, Adam married her. (272)

The narrator creates in art an outlet for the sexual desires he is unable to express in real life, and this inverse relationship between art and sexuality was to be made the central theme of *Tommy and Grizel* and *The Little White Bird.* This passage represents an important transitional moment in Barrie's fictional concerns. The artist-figure is presented throughout his work as unable to forge relationships because he is constantly in flight from reality; constantly using life as a resource for storytelling and for constructing other realities. *The Little Minister* is a largely successful attempt to present a narrator whose sexuality affects his identity as a storyteller. In *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), Barrie made the act of telling stories the central theme of his work, analysing the fantasising mind of a child. In the sequel *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), he extended his analysis to pick up the sexual theme once more, examining the corollaries between sentimentalism or fantasy and male sexuality. By the time of *The Little White Bird* (1902), that theme had been taken to such an extreme that the whole text was to be about the construction of stories, and the contest between artistic and sexual creation given an explicitly metafictional treatment.

THE *TOMMY* NOVELS: THE SENTIMENTAL MALE ARTIST

Writing to Conrad Aiken in 1914, T.S. Eliot asked: 'Do you think it possible, if I brought out the "Inventions of a March Hare", and gave a few lectures, at 5 p.m. with wax candles, that I could become a sentimental Tommy.'[76] The reference to Barrie's eponymous hero indicates how the publication of the *Tommy* novels fixed in the mind of the reading public a new literary identity for Barrie. Writing eighteen years after the appearance of *Sentimental Tommy* Eliot clearly felt his allusion required no elucidation, a fact which indicates both the longevity of impact of Barrie's novel and the resonance of its subject-matter. Here was Barrie's central

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[76] *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Valerie Eliot, 2 Vols (London, 1988), I, 59

fictional theme presenting itself, leading a reviewer of *Tommy and Grizel* to remark: 'just as Thackeray became haunted by a suspicion of snobbery, so with Mr Barrie the fear of sentiment becomes an obsession.'[77] In fact, Barrie's notebooks and journalism show that sentimentalism had been an obsession for some time.

Sentimentalism and sentimentality are words which have come to be used in generalised ways; to label something 'sentimental' is to curtly dismiss it as beneath intellectual concern. Worse still, sentimentality is widely accepted as unethical. As Robert C. Solomon has summarised, 'it seems to be all but agreed that sentimentality is no virtue even if it is not, like cruelty and hypocrisy, intrinsically vicious. Something is wrong with sentimentality.'[78] The pejorativeness of the term is actually built into the definition of the word itself. The OED defines sentimentality as 'the *affectation* of sensibility,' and sentimentalism as 'the disposition to attribute *undue* importance to sentimental considerations' and 'the tendency to *excessive* indulgence or *insincere* display of sentiment' (italics added). The pejorativeness thus resides not in sentiment itself but in the uses to which it is put. Under this definition, the raw material of emotion which an individual might be said to possess is seen as redundant in meaning: it is only when the situation at hand is deemed appropriate enough to warrant it that a show of emotion is endorsed as being sincere. A sentimentalist, therefore, is one who overlooks the question of sincerity and appropriateness, and expresses emotion regardless of the significance of the situation in hand. This is what Oscar Wilde means when he says in *De Profundis* that 'a sentimentalist is simply one who desires to have the luxury of an emotion without paying for it.'[79]

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[77] Stephen Gwynn, 'The Autumn's Books', *Fortnightly Review*, 74 (1900), 1028-38, p. 1037
[78] Robert C. Solomon, 'In Defense of Sentimentality', *Philosophy and Literature*, 14, 2 (October, 1990), 304-323, p. 305.
[79] Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis*, 1905, repr. *De Profundis and other Writings*, (Harmondsworth, 1954), 89-211, p. 196.

At the time when Barrie was writing, sentimentalism was a more specifically understood and visibly pertinent issue than it is now. D.H. Lawrence, for instance, was himself haunted by a fear of sentiment. In the midst of an attack on the fiction of John Galsworthy, Lawrence produced a clear definition of sentimentalism as 'faked feelings':

> Sentimentalism is the working off on yourself of feelings you haven't really got. We all *want* to have certain feelings: feelings of love, or sex passion, or kindliness, or anything else that goes at all deep. So the mass just fake these feelings inside themselves. Faked feelings! The world is all gummy with them. They are better than real feelings, because you can spit them out when you brush your teeth; and then tomorrow you can make them afresh.[80]

It was exactly this theme which Barrie placed at the centre of his fiction with the publication of *Sentimental Tommy*. As far back as 1890, however, he had discussed sentimentalism in a sketch contributed to the *Young Man*. Describing an imaginary character called 'The Sentimentalist,' he wrote:

> sentiment was a horse ever standing ready for him. He jumped on, and away they went. Then he dismounted with a proud chest, and at once did a mean thing, if convenient. All he remembered next day was his galop.[81]

The sentimentalist only remembers the galop - the luxury of the emotion - not what the purpose of it was. Tommy is sentimental for exactly these reasons: he values emotion for its own sake rather than for its appropriateness for the reality of the situation in hand. On one occasion in his boyhood, he arranges to change clothes with a boy, Lewis, who is in mourning for his father but is desperate to join the 'other ungodly youths at the game of kickbonnety.' Tommy offers to do the mourning for him and sits in a corner of the yard 'hunkering by himself in Lewis's jacket, and wiping his mournful eyes with Lewis's hanky' (334). Similarly, in another instance Tommy acts as a letter-writer for those members of his home

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[80] D.H. Lawrence, 'John Galsworthy', 1927, repr. *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays*, ed. Bruce Steele (Cambridge, 1985), 209-20, p. 215 [original italics]

[81] J.M. Barrie, 'Young Men I have Met. I - The Sentimentalist', *Young Man*, IV (1890), 6.

community who are unable to write themselves. He revels in the opportunity to express powerful sentiments which do not really belong to him and which he does not have the right to hold. In one instance he has to write as a woman who wishes to tell her mother about the death of a friend, and not only do his words induce tears in the eyes of both the person he is writing for and writing to, but they move *him* to tears also. Tommy displays emotion not because he genuinely feels that way about either situation at hand - he has no stake in them - his emotion is purely love of emotion itself, and it is specifically this which has come to be considered as the ethical weakness of sentimentality.

Both of these examples come from *Sentimental Tommy*, published in 1896 and subtitled 'The Story of his Boyhood.' It was immediately recognised as an unconventional work. As one reviewer remarked, the 'excursion into boyhood in pursuit of its sentimental qualities ... is something new in fiction.'[82] It is important to stress, however, that Barrie did not set out to write a book about a sentimental boy. The way *Sentimental Tommy* grew out of plans for a number of stories - 'The Sentimentalist', 'The Illegitimate Child' and 'The Painted Lady' - has been briefly sketched by Leonee Ormond.[83] Barrie's first note under the title 'Sentimental Tommy' reads: 'He tries to get rid of sentiment but it is too strong for him - up to death even (impervious nature or heredity?) He is this comic figure - end pathetic.'[84] This is actually the story of *Tommy and Grizel*, and for a number of years Barrie had been planning what was eventually to become that novel. But as he explained in an introduction to the American edition of *Sentimental Tommy*, whilst writing the story of Tommy the adult he found himself increasingly driven to describe Tommy's boyhood and eventually realised that a first novel would encompass all of that period alone. It is more appropriate, therefore, to think of

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[82] [D.S. Meldrum], 'A New Boy in Fiction', *Blackwood's Magazine*, 160 (December, 1896), 800-13, p. 805

[83] Leonee Ormond, *J.M. Barrie* (Edinburgh, 1987), chp. V

[84] Beinecke MS A2/14

Sentimental Tommy as a prelude rather than *Tommy and Grizel* as a sequel. The story Barrie had been planning was what eventually became *Tommy and Grizel* and, as I will show, adult sexuality was always at the forefront of his plans from the outset. But *Sentimental Tommy* became a novel about childhood, and most of the central themes he had been essaying in note form were temporarily shelved.

Sentimental Tommy is a collection of episodes which reveal Tommy's fantasising child-mind. In the context of childhood it has recently received a small amount of sympathetic critical analysis.[85] Tommy is best summed up by his schoolmaster, Cathro: '"... He is constantly playing some new part - playing is hardly the word though, for into each part he puts an earnestness that cheats even himself, until he takes to another."' (332). On one occasion Tommy has tricked his way into a charity dinner for young criminals, and seizes the opportunity to pretend he is a notorious thief. The problem is exactly as Cathro suggest, he cheats himself: "'Sure's death, Shovel", he whispered in awe, "I was thinking I done it, every bit!"' (88). This playing of parts turns Tommy into a Paterian artist, replacing reality with his own world of words. Style, not sincerity, is Tommy's forte - 'It was characteristic of him that he soon had Elspeth happy by arguments not one of which he believed himself' (136) - and pretence is as good as reality: 'Then Tommy was irritated, and said he knew she would mind, but if she just pretended she didn't mind, he could leave her without feeling that he was mean' (143).

As Lynette Hunter has argued, however, throughout the work the spectre of reality follows Tommy, casting his sentimentalism in a negative light, reminding us that there is a reality to which he permits himself no access.[86] When he recreates a Thrums Hogmanay in London for his dying mother he expects her to play along, to live inside *his* fantasy, and when she breaks down crying, aware that

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[85] Most successfully, perhaps, by Emma Letley, *From Galt to Douglas Brown*, 233-44
[86] Hunter, 'J.M. Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy', 41-3

she is going to die and never see Thrums again, it is only by a 'supreme effort' that Tommy 'shouldered reality to the door.' The implication made throughout, however, is that sentimentalism in a child is forgivable. The darker tone of *Tommy and Grizel*, on the other hand, makes it clear that in adulthood it must be rejected. *Sentimental Tommy* was really just a prelude - an important one because Barrie conceived childhood as an important state; but his ideas had always been to analyse the sentimental artist in light of male sexuality and it is significant that in *Sentimental Tommy* these issues are kept in mind through a proleptic technique. The first sentence identifies Tommy as 'celebrated' and the narrator constantly reminds the reader that Tommy will in future become a famous writer. It is also implied that Tommy's sentimentalism is going to prevent him from loving Grizel. In the manuscript Barrie spelled out the issue: 'He is such a superior artist that the sentiment passes for genuine in a breast that never harboured any.'[87] This failure of genuine emotion and its effect on male desire became the central theme of the later novel.

Even after having resolved to make *Sentimental Tommy* a novel about childhood, Barrie planned at first to conclude the work with an extended discussion of male desire. The published text ends with Tommy having failed to win a bursary to go to university because of his unwillingness to compromise his artistic integrity in an essay-writing competition. Tommy is sent by his guardian to spend the rest of his life working on a farm and the novel closes with him being ridden away in a cart. In the first draft, however, Barrie ended the novel with a glimpse of Tommy's new life. The plan was to show Tommy exposed to an adult masculine fraternity which alienated him:

> It was bothy talk, bothy lovemaking which discerned to him the subtle differences between the sexes, and so finished his boyhood. Then was born that shyness of women that ever after characterised him to so inordinate a degree.

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87 Beinecke MS S/45

Tommy was to be presented as sexually incapable and fraught with anxiety:

> Lads as young skylarked with theirs in the barn, fought with them for a kiss and gave them interested if leery looks, but Tommy never. One day, Bell Darg sat plump down on his knee to see what he would do, but his arms continued to hang by his side.

The draft-ending continues with Tommy confronting these sexual anxieties:

> Much did he want to kiss a woman in the aggressive manner of his companions ... He could not step out of himself and do it in the easy way. At last of deliberate intent he got drunk ... till self was swamped and then lay in wait for the woman ... the individual woman was of no importance, all he wanted was to kiss. That night and all next day he was sick, with violent headaches, less the whisky's doing perhaps than the result of his excitement, but a mighty satisfaction was within him too.[88]

Barrie obviously felt that this ending dealt with the crucial issue of Tommy's sexuality too abruptly, and if included it would have stood out rather isolated from the presentation of him as a boy. He decided to hold over treatment of Tommy the lover to the sequel.

The evolution of Barrie's ideas for the sentimental male artist go back a long way. Towards the end of 1891 he began to collect notes for a work entitled 'The Sentimentalist.' Andrew Birkin has traced how these notes relate to Barrie's growing attraction to the actress Mary Ansell, whom he was to marry in 1894.[89] The notes present a sentimental man who forces a girl into loving him but does not want to marry her. As in *The Little Minister*, their relationship is planned in terms of a shifting balance of power: 'she makes him say he is her slave - then impulsively cries it is she who is his - she wants him to say she is because she knows he isn't.'[90] The notes are undoubtedly drawn in part from the acute anxieties Barrie held over his relationship with Mary Ansell:

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88 Ibid.
89 Birkin, *J.M. Barrie and the Lost Boys*, 23-4
90 Beinecke MS A2/12

- she pretends doesnt want him to marry - really the cause of her doubts - she cant be sure he loves her
- He never had contact with a woman. If he had this might have made him exult less in making women love him - & so he would have been a better man (develop this notion)
- Perhaps the curse of his life that he never "had a woman"
- How far his shyness the real cause of all his weakness & Badness (work art) Got on with so few people tht had to make much of the few. Thus missed flirting days of boyhood & they came later when he knew the world.[91]

Most of these attributes came to be associated with Tommy, but Barrie always came back in his notes to one thing in particular: he associated sexual anxiety with the artistic vocation:

- He writes great book or play on this love affair of his, & the papers gush over its noble sentiment etc.
- The work so fine tht it made him attractive to women, it extolled them &c.
- He could feel tht his carrying on with women a curse, demeaning to him ... makes him do some of the biggest things in work.[92]

Although almost certainly related to his autobiography, it must be noticed that these notes are always written by Barrie in the third person, and it was part of the emerging idea of 'The Sentimentalist' that the hero conceived of life in no other terms than as raw material for art:

- such a man, if an author, wd be studying his love affair for a book. Even when proposing the thght of how it wd *read* wd go thro' him.[93]

The resort to his own autobiography was thus an inevitable part of Barrie's strategy. Just as he was doing himself, Barrie conceived his hero responding to everything which happened to him in life as if it was happening in art: he lived his life *in* art: 'after S.T. thght these things and felt sentimental agony, he takes notes of it for his books.'[94] Barrie's works, like Tommy's, are necessarily autobiographical. On a simple level, therefore, they are concerned with the ethical

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[91] Beinecke MS A2/12
[92] Beinecke MS A2/12
[93] Beinecke MS A2/13
[94] Beinecke MS A2/13

value of storytelling. Their complexity lies partly in this and partly in the extra dimension brought about by portraying the sentimental male artist as dogged by uncertain or unfulfilled sexuality.

The links Barrie makes between male sexuality and sentimentalism bear witness to how the latter came in the Victorian period to be an explicitly gendered term. The historical formation of that gendering requires brief treatment here. Whereas in the eighteenth century the ability to respond with sympathetic emotion to any situation encountered was a sign of ethical strength, the utilitarian strain in Victorian morals viewed sentimentalism cautiously. Attitudes were strongly influenced by Thomas Carlyle, who was concerned about the separation of sentiment from moral considerations: for him sentiment only became meaningful when it was applied to an external referent and seen within a moral paradigm. In his essay 'Characteristics', he wrote

> The barrenest of all mortals is the Sentimentalist. Granting even that he were sincere, and did not wilfully deceive us, or without first deceiving himself, what good is in him? Does he not lie there as a perpetual lesson of despair, and type of bedrid valetudinarian impotence?[95]

The word impotence points to the concomitant relationship in Carlyle's thought between industry and sexuality, and in the late Victorian period sentimentalism came to be defined along lines of gender. Herbert Sussman's recent book on *Victorian Masculinities* has shown how much of the ideas about successful manliness in the Victorian era emanate from Carlyle, who imagined the male self as a fluid, seminal energy which needed to be controlled and channelled towards industrial productivity.[96] Masculinity was only acquired when things were seen objectively and energy turned outward, and so by inevitable contrast, the inward-

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[95] 'Characteristics', *Edinburgh Review*, 1831, repr. *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, centenary edition, 30 Vols (London, 1895), XXVIII, 9

[96] Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art* (Cambridge, 1995)

viewing sentimentalist came to be seen in Carlyle's thought as solipsistic and fundamentally unmanly. Other work on Victorian masculinity has shown how such Carlylean ideas permeated all areas of life and became so deeply ingrained in institutions - particularly schools and youth organisations - that their persistence as part of an accepted moral code remains clearly visible to the present day.[97] Partly through the assistance of biological studies and the inevitable strength of authority they carried, manliness became encased in tropes of athleticism and the healthy body, and such ideas received a powerful cultural authority through the phenomenon of muscular Christianity. A recent book on this influential movement is so confident of its subject's cultural significance that it is subtitled 'embodying the Victorian Age.'[98] Indeed it could be said that because of its influence in schools and print media, and the utilisation of its ideals in political and imperial arguments, muscular Christianity represents the coming together of science, religion, education, literature, politics and nationalism into one gigantic theory of manliness. The outward-looking, physically active, stoical Victorian male was a testament to scientific fact, but he was also Godly and affirmatively British.

The cult of manliness had an important effect on the direction of fiction because the novel was not exempt from the mass gender theorising taking place elsewhere in society. The second half of the century witnessed an attempt at transforming the gendered identity of the novel which to a lot of writers (both male and female) was seen to be restricted by its identification with women and its subsequent association with the social taboo of sentimentalism. In one of the many manifestos for Romance which were written in the 1880s and 1890s, Henry Rider Haggard asked a poignant question:

> why do *men* hardly ever read a novel? Because in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, it is utterly false as a picture of life ... The

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[97] e.g. J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-class masculinity in Britain and America 1800-1940* (Manchester, 1987)
[98] Donald E. Hall (ed), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, 1994)

> ordinary popular English novel represents life as it is considered desirable that schoolgirls should suppose it to be.[99]

The question of whether a novel provided suitable reading matter for young women was firmly entrenched in the Victorian age and 'unsuitable for girls' became a general maxim of the tacit controls of censorship keeping the idea of novels and novel-reading within the realms of femininity. George Eliot's famous destruction of 'Silly Novels by Lady Novelists' (1856) typified the growing ridicule associated with this branch of the fiction market, and J.M. Barrie's critical writing shows a clear awareness of the gendered identity of novel-reading. In a critical article on Thomas Hardy he wrote:

> Novels have been divided according as they are popular with men or with women, though, indeed, only the favourites of the latter go into many editions. The lady who is at Mudie's counter daily may not skip everything except the love passages, but she prefers novels that are "sentimental" and has an aversion to complex characters.[100]

As Sally Mitchell has argued, fiction written by and for women was identified in the second half of the century largely as a recreational activity which aimed to illicit an emotional rather than an intellectual response.[101] Writing in 1859, W.R. Greg argued that 'novels constitute a principal part of the reading of women, who are always impressionable, in whom at all times the emotional element is more awake and more powerful than the critical [and] whose feelings are more easily influenced than ours.'[102] What really made the difference in the attempt to demarcate novel-reading along lines of gender was the impact of biological studies which claimed to scientifically legitimise the idea that women's mode of reading differed from that of men because of a greater biological capacity for sensitivity and sensibility. As Kate Flint has argued, the voracious female taste

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[99] Rider Haggard, 'About Fiction', 177
[100] Barrie, 'Thomas Hardy: The Historian of Wessex', 63
[101] Sally Mitchell, 'Sentiment and suffering: women's recreational reading in the 1860s', *Victorian Studies*, 21, 1 (1977), 29-45
[102] quoted by Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader: 1837-1914* (Oxford, 1993), 4

for reading was put down, however inaccurately, to a biological weakness which needed to be disciplined, and so for young men, to whom this sentimental capacity was already deemed to be in a smaller biological measure, the paths of discipline inevitably led even further away from the legitimisation of conveying and trusting emotion.[103] As a result, the second half of the century witnessed a growing increase in the availability of books and newspapers designed specifically for boys.[104] Adventure romances like those of Stevenson and Rider Haggard, coupled with the emergence of the school-story as a distinctive genre, helped to draw a clear line around what was identified as acceptable reading matter for boys and young men. Moreover, as Kimberley Reynolds has pointed out, there was a marked difference between fiction for boys at the end of the century from that at mid-century.[105] Whilst Thomas Hughes's highly influential *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1856) had allowed for a certain level of emotional expression in young men - Tom is moved and enriched by sympathising with George Arthur during his illness - as the century wore on boys' stories became less and less able to tolerate any hint of the sentimental. Writing in a preface to Talbot Baines Reed's equally successful *The Fifth Form at St. Dominics* (1881), G. A. Hutchinson wrote that the boys in the book 'stand at the very antipodes alike of an effeminate sentimentality.'[106] With regard to fiction in particular, sentimentalism was explicitly a gendered term.

By focusing on a male who seems to embody such an effeminate sentimentality, Barrie's *Tommy* novels are thus disruptive both of prevailing ideas of successful masculinity and of the newly masculinised idea of the novel. Barrie had earlier argued in favour of young men expressing emotion in the *Young Man*

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103 see ibid. chp. 4
104 see Joseph Bristow, *Empire Boys: Adventures in a Man's World* (London, 1991)
105 Kimberley Reynolds, *Girls Only? Gender and popular children's fiction in Britain, 1880-1910*, (New York, London etc, 1990), 50
106 quoted in ibid. 36

sketch, and it is important to remember that he is writing this inside the covers of a boys' newspaper - a publication whose pages elsewhere would ideologically endorse the rejection of sentimentality in favour of muscular Christianity:

> Young men who can talk readily with each other about their books and their pipes are still shy about their feelings, which they consider too sacred to mention in ordinary conversation. Often when they would like to blurt out little bits of sentiment they are tongue-tied less derision be the result - which is a pity, for their friends (if worth their salt) would like to unlock their bosoms too, and the exchange would be mutually beneficial.[107]

At the beginning of *Tommy and Grizel* we are introduced to Tommy the sentimental male artist. At first he works as an amanuensis to a popular novelist and ends up writing some of the monthly instalments of his employer's ludicrously formulaic 'Penny Numbers.' His particular love is in altering Pym's portrayal of ladies, and whenever he rewrites the love passages he becomes so engrossed in the products of his own creation that he himself is aroused into an emotional response to them: 'with a pen in his hand and a woman in his head he had such noble thoughts that his tears of exaltation damped the pages as he wrote' (16). This image of a man crying over his own fantasies is at the furthest remove from the representation of manliness in boys' stories and Adventure fiction of the same period, and it is this very deviation from normative constructions of gender which becomes the central theme of the novel. Tommy's sentimentalism and artistic ability are identified as taking him far away from contemporary ideals of manliness; they literally unsex him.

We saw in *The Little Minister* that Gavin Ogilvy's artistic pretensions were explicitly aligned with his sexual impotence, and Barrie built on this idea with Tommy. In real life Tommy appears indifferent to female society, but in art he is able to write about women's desires with such insight that his book, *Letters to a*

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[107] Barrie, 'Young Men I have Met. I - The Sentimentalist', op. cit.

Young Man about to be Married, proves to be an outrageous best-seller, becoming known simply as "'Sandys on Women"' (29). It becomes so famous that it is even quoted in the House of Commons and when Tommy is invited to move about fashionable society everybody assumes that because of his book he must have had extensive experience with women. A number of rumours circulate about his sexual history including one that his wife is dead which, although entirely false, Tommy is quite happy to go along with because it gives him an outlet to express his sentiment. In a scene with a lady at dinner we see him playing the part of the mourning husband still coming to terms with his imaginary wife's imaginary death:

> "I suppose," she said gently, to bring him out of the reverie into which he had sunk, "I suppose it happened some time ago?"
> "Long, long ago," he answered. Having written as an aged person, he often found it difficult to remember suddenly that he was two-and-twenty. (32)

The emotions Tommy expresses which so convince Mrs. Jerry of his sincerity are entirely imaginary and completely without referent to any real life situation, and it is implied that this is the only way in which he can offer love. He is constantly out to test the powers of his sentiment by finding out whether he can move or disturb the emotions of others, and this leads him to exercise sentiment even when it involves social implications he would rather avoid. After impressing Mrs Jerry with his imaginary mourning for his imaginary wife, he actually ends up proposing to her. She becomes so impressed of his depth of insight into matters of love that she immediately seeks his advice when she receives an unexpected proposal of marriage by letter. Tommy, however, cannot let an opportunity of playing a part go by. He is so stirred by the sentiments of Mrs. Jerry's unknown admirer that he pretends to have written the letter himself and proceeds to declare his imaginary love for her and to propose in a passionate display of emotion whilst all the time saying to himself "'What am I doing? ... Oh Heavens, if she should accept him!"' Tommy's is a virtuoso performance and he actually convinces Mrs Jerry that he

really does love her - 'I know you love me now, she said softly' (38) - which is simply not true. Fortunately she rejects him after some deliberation.

In this instance Tommy's sentimentality appears dangerous because it manipulates Mrs Jerry's own feelings. This is in contrast to the letter-writing episode in the earlier novel where it could be argued that Tommy's sentimentalism benefits his clients by allowing them to experience a more profound emotion than would otherwise be possible. But the scene with Mrs Jerry which comes early in *Tommy and Grizel* sets up the overall theme of the book, which is the relationship between sentimentalism and the failure of male sexual desire. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has briefly discussed the text as representative of the many novels at the end of the century which focus on the complications placed on male desire by the new proliferation of discourses on sexuality.[108] The work of Foucault has highlighted how the last third of the nineteenth century was a crucial moment in the history of sexuality: studies in science and sexology contributed to an enormously influential paradigm shift where sexuality was no longer seen pre-dominantly in terms of sexual acts but in terms of personality traits. From this period on, not only was one male or female in identity, but homosexual or heterosexual as well. Foucault argues that this resulted in 'a new specification of individuals' which inevitably resulted in sexuality becoming the controlling force in the construction of human subjectivity.[109] Taking up this approach, Sedgwick argues that from this point on anxiety over sexual identity has structured much of the organisation of western culture. She shows how in contrast to the fiction of Thackeray, for example, the bachelor figure in late Victorian fiction sees his absence of sexual desire as an issue of acute anxiety and often desperately tries to convince himself that he does desire women in order to escape the inevitable consequences of the newly forged, unyielding homosexual/heterosexual binary. As she remarks with

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[108] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 1990 (New York and London, 1991)
[109] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 42-3

regard to *Tommy and Grizel*, 'Grizel's tragedy is not that the man she desires fails to desire her - which would be sad, but, the book makes clear, endurable - but that he *pretends* to desire her.'[110] Tommy pretends because of the anxiety of identity which is brought about by the pressure exerted upon him to fulfil the ascribed conditions of normative masculinity: 'want of interest is almost immoral' roars Tommy's employer Pym, 'At your age the blood would have been coursing through my veins. Love! You are incapable of it' (21). Sedgwick's discussion has introduced an important new context within which to analyse Barrie's work, but her brief discussion cannot do the book full justice and she does not mention the crucial issue of sentimentalism which is identified as the explanation for Tommy's failure to desire.

Tommy's sentimentalism sends him inward and prevents him from achieving socially ascribed normative relations with women because he is always liable to fall in love with the products of his own imagination:

> While he sat there with eyes riveted he had her to dinner at a restaurant, and took her up the river, and called her "little woman," and when she held up her mouth he said, tantalisingly, that she must wait until he had finished his cigar. This queer delight enjoyed, back he popped her into the story (16-17).

The only women Tommy can fall in love with are those of his own fantasy, and this situation is exposed in a key episode where Tommy and a group of friends are taking lunch on a riverbank. Tommy, who is lost in his own creative mind, has noticed a glove in his pocket and is not at all concerned to explain to himself why it is there but instead begins to live out in his mind the role of a young man whose love for a faithless woman has been unrequited. Suddenly, reality offers to intrude on Tommy's fantasy when a little boy is spotted drowning in the river. Tommy duly jumps in to save him but before doing so he thrusts the glove into the hand of his

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[110] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 198

friend, Corp, saying 'Give her that, and tell her it never left my heart' (115). But as the narrator points out, reality has not intruded on Tommy's dream at all, 'it was his dream intruding on reality,' because Tommy is not responding to the drowning boy in terms of reality - he is still inside his fantasy; the man who jumps in the river and risks his life is not Tommy but the imaginary rejected young man. The owner of the glove is not Grizel, as Corp assumes, but the imaginary faithless woman. Tommy has, quite literally, fallen in love with his own creation.

Tommy's narcissism makes him an easy case-study for psychoanalysis, and much of what little criticism the novel has received has been keen to diagnose Barrie through Tommy as stuck in a developmental phase.[111] The complicated issue of psychanalysing an author through his own fictional creation impedes the conviction of even the most sophisticated of these arguments. Thomas Murray's study, for example, uses *Tommy and Grizel* as evidence to prove that Barrie was the victim of what he calls 'narcissistic parenting.'[112] What Barrie has created in fiction is subordinated within the discussion; used, in fact, as evidence for an extraneous discussion of biography. By focussing on the text and by situating Barrie's work more historically within Victorian ideas of masculinity and sentimentality we can perhaps strike at a more illuminating line of argument.

Tommy's love of his own fantasies, his constant embrace of self and his inability to regulate his own emotion by transferring it outward, place him at the very antithesis of the barometer of successful manliness outlined by Carlyle and fixed in place by forces like muscular Christianity. Tommy emerges instead as more in line with the figure of the masturbator - the Victorians' most feared sexual type. Masturbation was easily the most written about sexual subject in a period which wrote about sex rather a lot. In the words of Peter Gay, 'throughout the nineteenth

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111 Most fully, but also most rigidly and inflexibly by Geduld, *James Barrie*, 45-52
112 Thomas J. Murray, 'J.M. Barrie and the Search for Self', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Harvard University, 1988, 57

century, the vice of "self-abuse" or "self-pollution" propelled learned men, and some learned women, into postures of perspiring alarm; they flooded the literatures of medical advice and moral uplift with macabre case-histories and desperate, repetitive pleas for action before it was too late.'[113] Ed Cohen has argued that it was the medicalisation of theories on masturbation which, more than anything else, legitimated familial ideologies of masculinity. The masturbator, placed outside reproductive sex, was defined in medical texts as the 'negation of "manliness"' and became increasingly identified according to a personality type rather than a simple matter of acts.[114] New medical conditions were created - masturbatory insanity and spermatorrhoea - whose ubiquitousness as a diagnosis for any young man who showed symptoms of timidity, solitude, physical weakness, ill-discipline or, significantly for *Tommy and Grizel*, sexual impotence, is really quite remarkable. Victorian society lived in absolute fear of masturbatory insanity, and a sentimentalist would have been seen as dangerously close to this new medical type - crying and the secretion of mucous were, indeed, often associated with masturbation.[115] The key point once again was the understanding of masturbation not as an act but as evident of a particular personality, because it is this kind of 'specification of individuals,' to return to Foucault's phrase, which *Tommy and Grizel* is concerned about. The novel is an investigation of the tragic effects caused not by what Tommy does (sentimental acts) but by what he *is* - a sentimentalist.

If he was to be capable of desiring women a sentimentalist like Tommy had to learn to reject the masturbatory tendency by overcoming the preoccupation with his own mind, and it is made clear at the end of the book that Tommy could give Grizel affection but not passion, 'his passion, like an outlaw, had ever to hunt alone' (411). Tommy's sexual impotence derives from his masturbatory sentimentalism

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113 Gay, *The Bourgeois Experience*, 295
114 Ed Cohen, *Talk on the Wilde Side: Towards a Genealogy of Male Sexualities* (New York, 1993)
115 Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford and New York, 1994), 211

which throughout the book is seen as incompatible with acquisition of manhood: the narrator describes Tommy as 'a sentimentalist trying to be a man,' (158) and Grizel tells him at one stage, 'I am trying only to help you to be what a man should be' (291). Haunted by his inability to satisfy the woman who loves him, Tommy pretends to fall in love with Grizel in a desperate response to conform to the social strictures of successful masculinity. His attempt to love Grizel, however, emerges as just another attempt to love the products of his own fantasy. The two meet at the Cuttle Well, the scene in Thrums where Barrie placed all his courting couples, and it is here that 'he took her in his arms and kissed her reverently' (158), the only scene where he and Grizel experience any kind of physical contact. But Tommy is guilty of confusing the profundities he creates inside his stories with the lesser profundities that actually exist in the world:

> He was looking on the face of love at last, and it was love coming out smiling from its hiding-place because it thought it had heard him call. The artist in him who had done this thing was entranced, as if he had written an immortal page. (157)

What Tommy is loving is not Grizel, but that 'immortal page,' because 'he so loved the thing he had created that in his exultation he mistook it for her' (158). In a notebook probably compiled after *Tommy and Grizel*, Barrie wrote 'when in love we always mistake object for someone else.'[116] Tommy mistakes the real Grizel for a character in a work of art. In the manuscript Barrie recorded Tommy saying to himself 'what a delicious book you are, and how I wish I had written you!'[117] The idea was not lost in the published version:

> He looked at her long and adoringly, not, as he thought because he adored her, but because it was thus that look should answer look; he pressed her wet eyes reverently because thus it was written in his delicious part, his heart throbbed with hers that they might beat in time, he did not love, but he was the perfect lover, he was the artist trying in a mad moment to be as well as to do. (158-9).

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116 Beinecke MS A2/15
117 Holograph MS (Berg Collection)

It is acceptance of this new role - the perfect lover - which leads Tommy into believing that he really must desire Grizel. When they become engaged it is made absolutely clear that Tommy is not consciously deceiving her: the narrator says that 'during those weeks he had *honestly thought* that he was in a passion to be married' (276, my emphasis). His capacity to believe completely in any fantastical situation he creates leads him into not knowing the lines of demarcation between acting and being: 'he passed between dreams and reality as through tissue-paper' (180). Tommy can *honestly* believe anything.

Tommy's problem, then, brought on by his sentimentality, is chiefly one of ambiguity: he cannot know for certain what his passion is, or indeed whether he has one at all, and it is this secret of not knowing that he keeps locked up in his closet. In a section where the language mirrors that used by any individual across time who is forced to embody a socially-dissident sexuality, he imagines telling Grizel his secret:

> in a flood of feeling he had a fierce desire to tell her the truth about himself. But he did not know what it was ... "Grizel, I seem to be different from all other men; there seems to be some curse upon me ... I want to love you ... but apparently I can't. (178-9).

'It would have been an honest speech,' says the narrator, 'and it was in a passion to be *'out'* (emphasis added). What prevents Tommy from coming out is his sentimentality, the very same condition which prevents him from loving Grizel in the first place. Sentimentality is his problem, but sentimentality prevents him from articulating it. As he becames more involved in this 'honest speech' he sees the opportunity to play out yet another part. His imaginary revelation to Grizel continues, with him becoming more and more pre-occupied with self:

> he forgot that she was there, except as a figure needed to complete the picture of the man who could not love; he saw himself a splendidly haggard creature with burning eyes standing aside while all the world rolled by in pursuit of the one thing needful; it was a river and he must stand parched on the bank for ever and ever. (179-80).

This condition of the sentimentalist is brought out strongly in the scenes which cover Tommy's relations with Alice Pippinworth, a fashionable lady with whom he becomes interested not because he desires her - 'he had not even the excuse of being passionately drawn to this woman (339)' - but because of her 'reputation as a duellist whose defence none of his sex could pass' (340). She is a test case for his sentimental powers. Can he, like Prince Calaf in Puccini's *Turandot*, move this 'icy woman' to love where no other had so far managed? He pretends to desire her, but because of his sentimentalism he loses the boundary between reality and pretence; he plays the part so well that without realising it he becomes unsure whether he does not in fact really desire her and literally loses himself in his fantasy: 'he was in a frenzy of passion now', observes the narrator, 'he meant every word of it' (338).

The sentimentalist thus cannot know whether he really means something or not because the sentimentalist's 'real' self is located in his capacity for sentiment and not in any rational faculty which governs the deployment of it. As was implied by the OED's definition, the sentimentalist is thus essentially solipsistic. In *Tommy and Grizel*, Barrie presents his hero as attempting to repress this 'real' self and to assimilate himself to the society he lives in. He is said to be 'afraid' of his sentimentality (402) and the narrator says that 'he craved mastery over self' (117). Society demands that he sacrifice his sentimentality, transfer his emotion outward onto women and conform to the pre-ordained social and sexual roles of a man. When he pretends to love Grizel we are told that 'never in his life had he tried so hard to deceive at the sacrifice of himself.' He is aware that 'he had made believe in order that she might remain happy' (179), but the unanswered question remains 'Was it even make-belief? Assuredly he did love her in his own way ... I think I love you in my own way,' he tells Grizel, 'but I thought I loved you in their way, and it is the only way that counts in this world of theirs. It does not seem to be my world.' (278).

The essential incompatibility between Sentimental Tommy and the Grizel 'who could only be herself' (174), is brought home by her reaction to his second novel "Unrequited Love." He uses Grizel's plight as raw material for artistic construction but transfers it onto his authorial voice, speaking as if he was the one whose love was unrequited. The narrator notes that the reading public took the work as autobiography - 'fiction founded on fact, no doubt (for it would be ostrich-like to deny that such a work must be the outcome of a painful personal experience),' - and Grizel's disgust is conveyed in a letter: 'No one was ever more truly loved than you. You can know nothing about unrequited love. Then why do you pretend to know? ... It is nothing but sentiment ... I have ceased to care whether you are a famous man or not. I want you to be a real man' (303-4).

The final sections of the book deal with Tommy's desperate attempt to reject his sentimentality and become a 'real man.' He finally marries Grizel after she has gone mad, and in the manuscript Barrie makes it explicit that 'they did not live together as man and wife.'[118] In the published text this fact is left to the reader's inference. Once married, Tommy attempts to negate the artist in him by writing only for magazine papers, because if Tommy is to negate his myriad self he must deny his creative artistry. Grizel distrusts Tommy's writing because she sees the solipsistic dangers into which it can lead him: 'if writing makes you live in such an unreal world it must do you harm' (101). There is a suggestion that Grizel comes to admire him for trying to love her but it becomes clear that Tommy values his art more than he does Grizel and that his true potency always exists there. In marrying her he sacrifices himself, but he proves unable to repress the creative intensity and when he finds out that the missing manuscript of his new novel is not lost but has been stolen by Alice Pippinworth he leaves Grizel and renews his pursuit of Alice, again unsure over whether he really desires her or not. Finding that she has already

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[118] Ibid.

burned the manuscript he is eventually hanged accidentally when the collar of his coat gets hooked on an iron spike on the top of a wall when he is trying to reach her.

Lynette Hunter finds the novelist's judgement of Tommy 'unequivocal', arguing that 'the voice of the narrator condemns' his fantasies.[119] The tone is perhaps more ambivalent than she suggests. Viewed one way Tommy is the sentimental masturbator who cannot prevent himself veering towards solipsism; viewed another he is the creative artist whose inability or refusal to desire becomes the very touchstone of artistic greatness. It is certainly true, as Hunter says, that the essential point is the conflict between fantasy and reality and the courage required to attempt to resolve it. But it is significant that on each occasion when Tommy's (imaginary) love is rejected - by Mrs. Jerry, Alice Pippinworth and Grizel - he is described as 'in fine fettle for writing' (39). His sentimentalism makes him a more capable artist but it must be at the cost of sexual potency; as Alice Pippinworth tells him, he loves his manuscripts too much to love her. Tommy emerges here as the decadent aesthete who feels more at home in the inner life of art and the very profundity of his own emotions than in the external social issues to which he might at any stage deploy those emotions. In this context, Barrie's presentation of the sentimental male contributes to a newly emerging attitude towards male sexuality and creativity. The Victorian model of masculinity was transformed towards the end of the century by writers like Walter Pater who legitimised inwardness and viewed the retreat from heterosexual compulsion as a sign of intense mental consciousness.[120] The inner life became valorised as a more complex but more authoritative subjectivity and throughout *Tommy and Grizel* we witness Tommy living his life according to his own fantasies rather than the mundane facts of the real world around him. As such he emerges as the artist

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[119] Hunter, 'J.M. Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy', 45
[120] see Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities*, chp. 4

whose creative powers are stifled by a world which subordinates creative intensity (and thus sentimentality) to the direction of moral purposefulness. Tommy is always trying to make the events of his life more profound then they really are; for him the 'truth' about a situation is not how it is but how he *imagines* it:

> He had told the truth, and if what he imagined was twenty times more real to him than what was really there, how could Tommy help it? (77).

There is clear sympathy for Tommy here, and the novel seems to come out in condemnation of 'this world of theirs' as much as it does the sentimental artist. Rejection of sentimentality is necessary for successful integration into 'this world' with its rigid social and sexual structures, but in Tommy Barrie has presented a Prufrock-type figure, with his multiple selves, trying, but unable, to compromise with the world. There is only one possible ending. Both he and Grizel are destroyed not by sentimentalism, but by the social and sexual compulsion imposed upon Tommy to reject it.

It was exactly this question of whether Tommy's sentimentalism should be condemned or not which attracted D.H. Lawrence. In his novel *The Lost Girl*, two of his male characters enter into a discussion about Barrie's work:

> "May I see what you're reading?" And he turned over the book. "*Tommy and Grizel*! Oh yes! What do you think of it?"
> "Well," said James, "I am only at the beginning."
> "I think it's interesting, myself," said Albert, "as a study of a man who can't get away from himself. You meet a lot of people like that. What I wonder is why they find it such a drawback." ...

For Albert, it is not Tommy's self-consciousness and sentimentalism which is the problem, but the negative connotations associated with it:

> " ... now I wonder why self-consciousness should hinder a man in his action? Why does it cause misgiving? - I think I'm self-conscious, but I don't think I have so many misgivings. I don't see that they're necessary."

> "Certainly I think Tommy is a weak character. I believe he is a despicable character," said James.
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> "No I don't know so much about that," said Albert, "I shouldn't say weak exactly. He's only weak in one direction. No, what I wonder is why he feels guilty ... What's the matter is that he feels guilty for not knowing his own mind. That's the unnecessary part. The guilty feeling"
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> Albert seemed insistent on this point, which had no particular interest for James.
>
> "Where we've got to make a change," said Albert, "is in feeling that other people have a right to tell us what we ought to feel and do."[121]

For Lawrence's character, the real problem is not Tommy's sentimentalism, but 'this world of theirs,' which tells him what he should feel. In Lawrence's response to Barrie we can see the shift of the modern novel. If Barrie's novel dramatises the battle to overcome the unstable ego, Lawrence's work was, in part, a celebration of the unstable ego. It is not surprising that he found *Tommy and Grizel* so interesting.

In a highly influential essay published in 1960, David Daiches heaped further destruction on Barrie's already waning reputation by dismissing him as 'The Sexless Sentimentalist.' *Tommy and Grizel*, it was argued, involved a 'distortion of sex,' and Barrie was charged with taking 'a positively masochistic pleasure in frustrating all normal expectations about the proper satisfaction of adult human relationships.'[122] In this article, however, Daiches succeeds only in adopting the same moral ground which condemns Tommy. He clearly speaks from 'this world of theirs', the world that sets up ideas of 'normal' human relationships and expects men like Tommy to conform to them. *Tommy and Grizel* is a much darker novel than *Sentimental Tommy* and the change in tone owes a lot to the biographical background of the intervening years when Barrie was writing the later work (1896-1900). The unhappiness and childlessness of his marriage had clearly shifted his

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[121] D.H. Lawrence, *The Lost Girl*, 1920, ed. John Worthen (Cambridge, 1981), 70-1
[122] David Daiches, 'The Sexless Sentimentalist', *The Listener* (May 12, 1960), 841-3

attitude and the painful intensity which accompanies Barrie's treatment of Tommy is unique in his writing in its absence of humour. The distortions of sex are not a deliberate attempt to manipulate the reader, as Professor Daiches would have it, but a serious, profound investigation into the way normative discourses of sexuality manipulate and destroy the dissident individual.

Quite apart from its important and highly original treatment of masculinity and male desire, *Tommy and Grizel* is an evidently up-to-date novel. Barrie cannot be accused of being out of touch with contemporary developments in literature as the prevailing critical orthodoxy would suggest. The presentation of the sentimentalist as being compelled to replace reality with stories fits exactly into the ethos of decadence characteristic of the *fin de siecle*. Barrie may not advocate decadence in quite the way Wilde does in works like 'The Decay of Lying', for instance, but he is discussing similar issues; furthermore, his presentation of the creative artist trying to replace reality with a world of the imagination shows his work to be a useful conduit between the Romance theorists I discussed at the beginning of this chapter and the modernists. Barrie goes one step further than the Romance theorists. Where Rider Haggard was aiming to create in a work of art a 'vision of the perfect, which we see only in books and dreams,'[123] Barrie presented a character trying to live his life in this way. He thus incorporated the artistic ethos of the Romance theorists into the aesthetic object itself and allowed the text to perform a debate on the viability of that ethos. As such his work leads away from the reductiveness inherent in the direct presentation of 'a boyish dream' characterised by an 'immeasureable difference from life,'[124] for which Stevenson was aiming. The role of the narrator in *The Little Minister* and the presentation of Tommy as artist in the *Tommy* novels allowed Barrie to provide a perspective on the creative mind which wished to construct the 'boyish dream.' In this respect his

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123 Rider Haggard, 'About Fiction', 173
124 Stevenson, 'A Humble Remonstrance, 371, 370

fiction moves towards a concern with the way that the 'boyish dream' may well constitute a more profound reality than that articulated by the structures of the world at large and thus leads into the concerns with reality evident in the theories and fiction of the modernist novelists.

Of course unlike the modernists there is no great experiment with narrative technique in the Tommy novels because the modernist-artist figure is presented from the outside. In *The Little White Bird*, however, his next and final novel, Barrie produced a quite astonishingly modern narrative experiment which in terms of form is as radical as any work of fiction being produced at the time.

THE LITTLE WHITE BIRD: CHALLENGING MATERNITY; REACHING POSTMODERNITY

The Little White Bird has a clear link with *Tommy and Grizel*. Tommy's third novel is called 'The Wandering Child' and is about a lost boy who does not want to grow up. This is clearly an hypothesis for the Peter Pan story and it was *The Little White Bird* which first presented that myth to the public: the Peter Pan story is one of the fantasies told by the narrator to a little boy. As a text in itself *The Little White Bird* has been sorely neglected, too easily dismissed as simply a moment in the genesis of *Peter Pan*. It is, I would argue, Barrie's finest work of fiction and the culmination of his thinking on the construction of fictional reality. It is also indelibly wound up with autobiography but again I have largely refrained from making biographical analysis. Once more this is partly because of the valuable work of Andrew Birkin, but more specifically because of reasons of scope. It would need a thesis in itself to address the relationship between text and autobiography in Barrie's work.[125] In any case, it is not, I think, inappropriate to approach this text first and foremost as a work of fiction. The fact that the whole

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125 Fiona Russell goes someway towards achieving this in an unpublished PhD thesis: 'Possession: Mourning, Childhood and J.M. Barrie', University of Cambridge, 1994.

text is about the act of *writing* should alert us to the dangers of seeing Barrie's own *writing* as nothing more than a transparent window shedding light on his complicated personality.

The narrator is a retired soldier and London bachelor clubman who anonymously engineers the marriage of a courting couple and then, after his identity has become known to them, befriends their son David, to whom he tells stories. As Jacqueline Rose has argued, however, the narrator's involvement with the child is anything but innocent;[126] his storytelling is prompted by sinister motives: he is trying to steal the child from his mother, 'to take him utterly from her and make him mine' (114). The narrator's object in his storytelling is to re-write David's origins and to recreate him as a fictional character so that he can claim parental possession of him. He is thus challenging the creative power of the mother with his own creative power as an artist.

The Little White Bird has a complicated layering of audience. Parts are addressed solely to the reader, whilst others are addressed principally to David. Towards the end of the first chapter the narrator writes: 'One day, when David was about five, I sent him the following letter: 'Dear David: If you really want to know how it began, will you come and have a chop with me to-day at the club?' (9). The story that he goes on to tell in the first few chapters is told to David as well as the reader and is about how he played a part in David being born: 'we are going back, David, to see your mother as she was in the days before there was you' (10). The narrator thus lays claim to the power of *uncreating* David:

> 'It doesn't make me littler, does it?' he asked anxiously; and then, with a terrible misgiving: 'It won't make me too little, will it, father?' by which he meant that he hoped it would not do for him altogether ... You can't think how little David looked as he entered the portals of the club. (10)

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126 Jacqueline Rose, *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (London and Basingstoke, 1984), 23

As Rose argues, the child here is 'multiply caught up in, possessed and owned by the story.'[127] His existence - non-existence in this instance - is created by it. The second chapter opens with the lines 'As I enter the club smoking-room you are to conceive David vanishing into nothingness, and that it is any day six years ago at two in the afternoon.' With David successfully uncreated, the narrator is free to tell him the story of his parents' courting and of his involvement in their relationship. He tells a story about a nursery governess whose meetings with a struggling young painter he observes from the smoking-room window of his club. When one day the governess alters her mood, the narrator realises there has been a quarrel and engineers their make-up by dropping a letter so that the two might meet at the post office. He thus proudly stakes his claim in David's creation:

> 'you don't seem to understand my boy', I said tartly, 'that had I not dropped that letter, there never would have been a little boy called David A____.' (20)

The narrator is trying to identify David as a fictional entity, whom he creates and uncreates according to his storytelling imagination. But he does not simply try to claim a part in David's natal creation, he creates a fantasy of ownership which aims to defeat the procreative power of the mother in the form of a pre-natal myth. The extended fantasy which he has told David is that children do not originate in the womb, but have a previous life as birds in the Kensington Gardens' (20). The pre-natal myth is turned into the central fantasy, Peter Pan, which is told at length to David, covering six chapters, in the middle of the book. As Peter Hollindale remarks, the object of these chapters is 'to show that the narrator knows, far better than a mother or a nurse with more legitimate claims to David, just how the boy thinks and feels.'[128] The narrator lays claim to having known David before he was born and thus before his mother knew him: 'The first

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[127] Ibid. 24

[128] introduction to *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens and Peter Pan and Wendy* (Oxford, 1991), xx

time I saw David was on the sward behind the baby's walk' (22). But his idea that children were birds before they are born allows David to express a desire, when hearing the story of his natal origins, to alter his past and remain a bird:

> when David saw his chance of being a missel-thrush again he called out to me quickly: 'Don't drop the letter!' and there were tree-tops in his eyes. (22)

Dropping the letter would mean that David's parents would have been reconciled and David born. The narrator has worked it so that David's birth will be dependent upon his choice as a storyteller, and as Harry M. Geduld has pointed out, 'throughout the book, Barrie emphasises David's possession by, dependence on, and "creation" by the narrator.'[129] This is how he lays claim to ownership of David; he has set up a fantasy of self-fathering, a theme which Elaine Showalter has found characteristic of male writing of the *fin de siecle*, when 'celibate male creative generation was valorized, and female powers of creation and reproduction were denigrated.'[130] But the narrator seems reluctant to allow his fantasy to go beyond a certain stage. As Lynette Hunter has argued, throughout the text he is presented as 'continually slipping into fantasy and continually pulling back to destroy the illusion.'[131] In this scene it is he who brings David back to reality: '"Am I not to drop the letter, David? Think of your poor mother without her boy!"' (23) Reluctantly, David agrees to the dropping of the letter and the narrator concludes the chapter by saying 'So I dropped the letter, as I think I have already mentioned; and that is how it all began.'

The narrator's artistic capacities are identified as a replacement for sexuality in the way they were for Tommy. The notebooks show that Barrie initially planned to call the narrator 'Jocelyn'[132] and in the published text his effeminacy is often

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129 Geduld, *Sir James Barrie*, 56
130 Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy*, 78
131 Hunter, 'J.M. Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy', 46
132 Beinecke A2/19. The significance of this name becomes more complicated by the fact that it was the pet-name Barrie used for Sylvia Llewellyn Davies. See Birkin, *J.M. Barrie and the Lost*

pointed out - the members of his club refer to him as 'a confirmed spinster' (88). This feminising accentuates his maternal leanings, and his fantasy of procreation is born out of a desire to substitute the world of asexual storytelling for the real world of sexuality. But the narrator constantly keeps his fantasy in check in a way which marks out Barrie's distinctiveness as a fantasy writer. *The Little White Bird* is not a fantasy in the way Carroll's *Alice* books are, for instance, instead it plays out a deliberate, metafictional debate on the status of fantasy. This is exposed in a key chapter which functions as a short three-page interlude where the narrator reflects on his own character and explicitly debates the respective claims of fantasy and reality. Thinking over his past, the narrator imagines what it would have been like not to have arranged the reconciliation of Mary and instead to have attempted to woo her himself:

> suppose, instead of returning Mary to her lover by means of the letter, I had presented a certain clubman to her consideration? Certainly no such whimsical idea crossed my mind when I dropped the letter, but between you and me and my night socks, which have all this time been airing by the fire because I am subject to cold feet, I have sometimes toyed with it since. (98)

The narrator here is not simply reflecting on what might have happened had he not dropped the letter, but pondering now whether to go back and *rewrite the story* without dropping the letter. This is an explicit piece of metafiction. He is alerting us to the fact that he is writing a story and pondering how best to construct it. There are two ways of interpreting Barrie's strategy here. Either he is presenting the narrator as completely divorced from the fictional world of his characters and writing a story about a bunch of people he has just made up (like Barrie is), or he is presenting the narrator as a character who belongs to the same fictional world as the characters he (the narrator) happens to be writing about but likes to pretend that these characters are fictional and not inhabiting the same reality as himself.

Boys, 68

The second option is surely the correct interpretation given what we have seen of the narrator's claim to own David because he has recreated him into a fictional entity. In the reality *inside* the novel we know that he *did* drop the letter, Mary *was* reconciled with her future husband and David *was* born. His contemplating changing these facts (facts inside the fiction) draw attention instead to his desire to understand people and events as if they were inside a story that he has just made up. Here is the decadent aesthete in action: writing a different reality, substituting a world of his own for the mundane one around him. The narrator wants to live his life inside *his story*, not inside external reality. As such he is the inevitable progression from Tommy, the character who grew out of Barrie's notes for the man who studied everything that happened to him in life as if it were happening in a work of art.

The narrator's reflections, however, show an awareness of the claims of reality, and like Tommy he struggles to escape sentimentalism. As his reflective interlude continues he makes it clear that had he attempted to woo Mary it would not have been sincere. Like the Tommy who carries a ready-made love-letter to nobody in particular around with him in his pocket should he ever need to use it, the narrator's emotions are pre-packaged and not dependent for their expression upon an external object. He imagines giving one of his love-letters to Mary and telling her: 'they were all written to another woman, ma'am, and yet I am in hopes that you will find something in them about yourself' (99). The imagined encounter with Mary can thus only ever be sentimental, because his emotions are not dependent upon any external referent for their expression. This reflective interlude is a contemplation of the worth of being sentimental. The narrator is 'tempted' by the 'easiness' of rewriting things and insincerely wooing Mary because, like Tommy, he is desperate to find an outlet for his large body of emotion: 'here was I burdened under a load of affection, like a sack of returned love-letters, with no lap into which to dump them' (99). This is the crisis for the sentimentalist; reality is not

enough. But the narrator resists the temptation: 'the whole thing was merely a whimsical idea.' He decides: 'I dropped the letter, and shouldered my burden' (100).

Sentimentalism is thus the key to understanding the narrator's character and the ideological drive of the book, which suggests that artistic creation, though attractive, is lesser than reality. The narrator attempts to raise the 'shadow' in the form of the 'dream' child, above the 'substance' of the 'real' child. His fictional re-creation of David and his myth of Peter Pan are not his only attempts at fantasy fathering. During the night when David is born the narrator is detained by David's expectant father in the street and ends up giving him the impression that he too is an expectant father. Timothy, an *imaginary* child is born and conceived (deliberate pun) by the narrator as a rival to the *real* child David. Timothy causes the narrator problems; Mary and her husband continually ask about him and he has great difficulty giving credible answers. He decides to kill Timothy off so that he can justify buying toys and clothes (which he can claim belonged to Timothy) and give them to David. Timothy's death, however, allows the narrator to indulge in his sentimentality. As he says so himself, the fantasy takes possession of him. He mourns the death of his son like Jack Worthing does his brother in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, but unlike Jack - and this specifically is what makes the narrator sentimental in Barrie's strict definition of the term - he does so not because he has to but because he wants to, and not in public but in private:

> I seem to remember carrying him that evening to the window with uncommon tenderness (following the setting sun that was to take him away), and telling him with not unnatural bitterness that he had got to leave me because another child was in need of all his pretty things (67)

Fantasy allows a false repository for sentiment and is an illusory consolation. It allows the narrator to indulge his feelings in a paradigm empty of any external reference.

The humorous tone which Barrie adopts here is characteristic of the text as a whole, and as with Wilde there is an impression that the humour provides a cloak for the darker preoccupations of the text. After all, this is a story about a man who tries to steal a child from his mother and who at one stage actually lures him into his bed:

> 'I don't take up very much room,' the far away voice said.
> 'Why, David,' said I, sitting up, 'do you want to come into my bed?'
> 'Mother said I wasn't to want it unless you wanted it first,' he squeaked.
> 'It is what I have been wanting all the time,' said I, and then without more ado the little white figure rose and flung itself at me. For the rest of the night he lay on me and across me, and sometimes his feet were at the bottom of the bed and sometimes on the pillow, but he always retained possession of my finger, and occasionally he woke me to say that he was sleeping with me. (232)

This passage appears explicit in its dramatisation of paedophilic desire, and yet it is not until 1969 and a short, sly article by Graham Greene that I have found any confrontation of the subject.[133] Greene pretends that Barrie's book is being brought before a jury in light of The Obscene Publications Act of 1959, and his own streak of humour allows him to shy away from confronting the issue explicitly. This particular passage in *The Little White Bird* is, perhaps, where the work becomes most serious, not for the moment of revelation of possible paedophilic desire, but for what immediately follows. The narrator tells us 'I had not a good night. I lay thinking':

> Of this little boy, who, in the midst of his play while I undressed him, had suddenly buried his head on my knees.
> Of the woman who had been for him who could be sufficiently daring.
> Of David's dripping little form in the bath, and how when I essayed to catch him he had slipped from my arms like a trout.

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[133] Graham Greene, 'Regina V Sir James Barrie', *Spectator* (November 8, 1969), 634

> Of how I had stood by the open door listening to his sweet breathing, had stood so long that I forgot his name and called him Timothy. (232)

The repetition of 'of' lends an oppressive rhythm to this passage which hits exactly at the narrator's struggle between fantasy and reality. David, the real child, can only slip through his arms; the only way in which he can truly belong to the narrator is if he is *misrecognised* as the dream child, Timothy. The narrator's desire for David takes the form of a desire for possession which he knows he can only have within fantasy.

When the narrator kills Timothy off he allows himself to indulge this fantasy by pretending that his dream child is superior to the real child:

> Timothy's hold on life, as you must have apprehended, was ever of the slightest, and I suppose I always knew that he must soon revert to the obscure. He could never have penetrated into the open. It was no life for a boy. (66)

This is a deliberate attempt to defeat reality by re-defining it. Boys, it is claimed, should belong to the 'obscure' not the 'open' life. But the course of the novel rejects the narrator's claim to superiority and allows the mother to triumph. As the novel nears its end, David's mother becomes pregnant again. The narrator first hears of this through David, who has been told that a sister, Barbara, is on the way. He innocently asks the narrator whether she will be allowed into the life of the gardens (i.e. into the story the narrator is telling to/with David). Learning about Barbara arouses the narrator's jealousy and he proceeds to launch a scathing denunciation of David's mother:

> I was shocked, not perhaps so much shocked as disillusioned, for though I had always suspicioned Mary A____ as one who harboured the craziest ambitions when she looked most humble, of such presumption as this I had never thought her capable. (283)

Having (partly) successfully stolen her son from her and thus proved his sex-free paternal powers to be potentially as strong and possessive as hers (even if only for

a short time, because it is made clear that the narrator is soon to lose David forever as he is shortly to go to school and grow up) the narrator is confronted with a dilemma. The reproductive potential of David's mother haunts him and arouses his jealousy: 'How to be even with her?' The answer comes in the form of *outwriting* her. The narrator has known that for long 'Mary had contemplated writing a book' and when he learns from David that the title is to be 'The Little White Bird,' he declares 'I was like one who had read the book to its last page. I knew at once that the white bird was the little daughter Mary would fain have had; she was that kind of woman' (289). Revelling in his superior artistic potency, the narrator cynically denounces Mary as being unable to create anything but children:

> O Mary, your thoughts are much too pretty and holy to show themselves to any one but yourself! The shy things are hiding within you. If they could come into the open they would not be a book, they would be a little Barbara. (290)

When he learns later that she has abandoned her project he sees an opportunity to triumph over her by displaying his superiority in terms of artistic potency:

> I decided, unknown even to David, to write the book, 'The Little White Bird,' of which she had proved herself incapable, and then, when, in the fulness of time, she held her baby on high, implying that she had done a big thing, I was to hold up the book. (290-1)

The contest between artist and mother is shown to be completely in the narrator's hands as he is the father of the book, and in contrast to the letter-dropping episode this time the narrator *is* going to write a different reality. He goes on to write the story of the birth of Mary's child which manages to be born without Mary physically giving birth. He places all of the characters, including Mary, in Patagonia whereupon reading a newspaper they learn that Mary has given birth to a new baby in London:

> The bald announcement at once plunged us into a fever of excitement, and next morning we set sail for England. Soon we came within sight of the white cliffs of Albion. Mary could not sit down for a moment, so hot was she to see her child... (292)

The reader accepts the apparent ludicrosity of seeing Mary rushing home to see for the first time the child she has just given birth to without actually being present because we know that this is the *story* the narrator is telling David, who was 'quite carried away by the reality of it' (293). Defamiliarised by the conscious fictionality of the text we are reading, we throw the ludicrosity back on the narrator, desperate as he is to disempower the biological mother by not allowing Mary to physically give birth to her child. His story denies her the reproductive, creative capacities she naturally has. As the narrator reaches the climax of the story, he finishes by explaining to David how 'your mother rushed in, and next moment her Benjamin was in her arms' (293). David, however, demands that he be given a sister. Barbara must be the name of the new child, and they decide to settle the outcome of the book *The Little White Bird* over a game of cricket.

Barrie has thus brought his competition between the storytelling world and the real world to a head. How far is the narrator prepared to go in replacing reality with a story and the real child with the dream child? In the end his resolve and artistic omnipotence are broken down by the persuasive voice of a little boy. David really believes that if he loses the cricket match his mother will not give birth to the girl she desperately wants, and throughout the match the narrator tries to pretend to himself that he does not care for David's transparent feelings:

> I opened my second innings by treating him with uncommon respect, for I knew that his little arm soon tired if he was unsuccessful, and then when he sent me loose ones I banged him to the railings. What cared I though David's lips were twitching. (296)

The narrator at this stage appears firm in his intention to win and ensure the birth of Benjamin, not Barbara, but his resolve is broken when handing the bat to David and 'something wet fell on my hand, and then a sudden fear seized me lest David should not win.' The narrator loses the match, but only because he allows David to win - dropping catches and shouting not out when the ball hit the stumps, and all because 'the face he turned to me was terrible' (297). David succeeds through the

power of a tear, and the final impression the novel leaves is of a real humanity shattering a constructed fantasy.

Although the narrator gives in to David and allows him to have a sister inside the story he is telling him, there is no reality beyond the story which is brought in to deconstruct the narrator's fantasy. We are never told whether Mary really gave birth to a boy or girl, only what the narrator allowed to happen in *his story*. In fact Barrie removed such a recourse to a reality beyond the narrator's fantasy. In the published version the chapter containing the cricket match ends with a last line: 'And that is how we let Barbara in.' In the manuscript, however, Barrie wrote a longer concluding paragraph which referred to the real Barbara who 'was born a fortnight ago' and 'is now lying in a sweet cot, with Mary bending adoringly over her.'[134] That explicit analogy between the *real* Barbara who would have come regardless of the outcome of the cricket match and the *imaginative* Barbara who in David and the narrator's mind was *created* by the cricket match is not made in the published text. Instead the focus is entirely on the way David's tearful humanity forces the narrator to abandon his fantasy of Benjamin. The real Barbara never happens because the narrator, as author of *The Little White Bird*, can decide that she is never going to exist. But through his metafictional strategy Barrie encourages the reader to view the narrator's artistry as falsely claiming a superior reality to the real world of real children.

In the final chapter, the narrator makes one final attempt to place his artistic creation above maternal creation. He tells us that he has finished the book and all that remains is the dedication, which is to be to Mary, and which he hopes will be his final triumph:

> '... In fine, madam, you chose the lower road, and contented yourself with obtaining the Bird. May I point out, by presenting you with this dedication, that in the meantime I am become the parent

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[134] Beinecke MS L55

> of the Book? To you the shadow, to me the substance. Trusting that you will accept my little offering in a Christian spirit, I am, dear madam,' etc. (299-300)

As the narrator and Mary finally meet in this last chapter their direct opposition is made explicit. When the narrator tries to triumph over her inability to write the book, Mary replies: 'the Book? I had forgotten all about the book!' The narrator shows her the dedication and she swiftly and confidently refutes his sentiments: 'it is I who have the substance and you who have the shadow, as you know very well' (308). When she reads the book she recognises that Timothy was only a dream-child and therefore lesser than David. Laughing as she reads the manuscript, Mary tells him, 'How wrong you are in thinking this book is about me and mine, it is really all about Timothy.'

> At first I deemed this to be uncommon nonsense, but as I considered I saw that she was probably right again, and I gazed crestfallen at this very clever woman. (309)

Mary stabs right at the heart of the narrator's illusion. As R.D.S. Jack has summarised, she triumphs over 'dishonest artistry' by demonstrating that artistry to be 'a desperate myth erected to protect him against the knowledge of age, sterility and love sublimated.'[135] His illusions are exposed as lesser than reality and he is guilty of pretending otherwise.

I have argued that it is his sentimentalism which leads the narrator to indulge in illusory consolation and pretend that art can be greater than reality. The key to the whole text is thus contained in the narrator's words in the final paragraph: 'I have stored within me a great fuel of affection, with nobody to give it to' (311), a line which links back to the earlier reflective interlude discussed above and its idea of being 'burdened under a load of affection, like a sack of returned love-letters, with no lap into which to dump them' (99).The real world

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135 Jack, *The Road To The Never Land*, 201-2

does not satisfy the amount of feeling contained within the creative artist and so he has to invent more. When at the end Mary suggests to the narrator that the reason he took such an interest in her was because he too once loved a lady, he allows the idea briefly to appeal to his sentimentalism.

> On my honour as a soldier this explanation of my early solicitude for Mary was one that had never struck me, but the more I pondered it now - I raised her hand and touched it with my lips, as we whimsical old fellows do when some gracious girl makes us to hear the key in the lock of long ago. 'Why, ma'am,' I said, 'it is a pretty notion, and there may be something in it. Let us leave it at that.' (306)

We are surely meant to read this as the narrator tempted by but resisting the chance of escaping into another imagined past. Do we even know that he really raised Mary's hands to his lips, or is he just creating yet another fantasy?

It would be too easy (and take too long) to challenge the opinions of the numerous critics who have reached conclusions about Barrie as an author without taking on board the ideas contained in this work. Those of J.B. Pick, however, are representative and revealing. Barrie, it is claimed, stopped short of 'authentic discovery' because he 'could not face what he saw, and falsified what he said.'[136] But this, surely, is the *whole point* of *The Little White Bird*: it is the narrator, not Barrie, who cannot face what he sees and falsifies what he says, and it is the narrator who, at the end, is cut down to size by the mother. The ideological drive of the book is that you can learn from fantasy but not live in it and Barrie's authorial voice does not reject the narrator's fantasy, it rejects his dishonesty in claiming fantasy to be greater than reality. After all, if Barrie felt there was nothing to be gained from fantasy he would never have written the novel (or most of his plays). *The Little White Bird* explores what it means to construct a fictional reality; it is a humorous but profound meditation on the relationship between Art and Life

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136 J.B. Pick, *The Great Shadow House: Essays on the Metaphysical Tradition in Scottish Fiction* (Edinburgh, 1993), 58

presented through an innovative, reflexive narrative method. It is important to recognise the originality of Barrie's use of form. Late Victorian and Edwardian novelists like Bennett, Wells, Galsworthy and (bigger names) Forster, even Conrad, are, by contrast, quite conventional. The originality of the text gripped contemporary reviewers even if they decided to refrain from critical analysis and say simply that the book was 'all Barrieness.'[137]

For all its innovation, however, *The Little White Bird* is part of a development of themes traceable back to *The Little Minister* - the work which is often seen as the apotheosis of the Kailyard. But it is precisely that identification which exposes the redundancy of the critical term Kailyard. As a generic category it can go no further than *The Little Minister* and as such is a hugely restricting context within which to discuss Barrie's prose fiction. To ignore the later work, as the term encourages us to do, is to do this remarkably original writer an outrageous disservice. It also serves to cloud the extent of Scottish literary achievement in the period under discussion. Unless we accept that the term Kailyard is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but part of the critical parameters which have been built up to allow the discussion of individual writers and texts to take place, we will continue to adopt an inferiorist perspective on both the fiction of J.M. Barrie and the state of Scottish culture in the last two centuries. It is the implications of this tendency which will be discussed in chapter 6. The following chapter, however, deals with the vexed issue of popular culture, because for many critics Barrie's fiction was merely a prelude for the armoury of kitsch slogans and symbols which took a grip over representations of Scotland in the twentieth century.

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137 *TLS* (November 14, 1902), 339

V

POPULAR CULTURE AND THE ATTACK ON KAILYARD

Due to the breadth of its application, Kailyard has a complicated association with debates on high and low culture. In my introduction I drew a distinction between the specific and general meanings of the term, and as Tom Nairn has put it, as far as the general meaning is concerned, 'the whole thing is related to the much larger field of popular culture.'[1] Any manifestation of kitsch in popular cinema, television, museums or tourist centres is often labelled by the intelligentsia as 'Kailyard.' The use of the term in this way has resulted in a number of misguided assumptions being drawn over the status of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren within debates over high and low art. Their work has been uncomplicatedly lumped together with images from various media with which they are at best only tangentially related. The co-existence of specific and general meanings to the term Kailyard has allowed these three writers to be dismissed as no more than popular culture, whereas their actual relationship to debates over high and low art is considerably more complex. This chapter will show how it was precisely the question of what constituted popular culture which made the work of Maclaren in particular so notorious within Scotland.

Although the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren form an integral part of discussions of literary culture in Scotland, the issue of exactly where their work lies on the high/low literary scale has never been sufficiently or effectively discussed. Beth Dickson has argued that 'continued confusions about the Kailyard in Scottish criticism' are caused by a failure to 'distinguish effectively between

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[1] Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 162

popular and literary writing.'[2] Once we have made such a distinction, Dickson claims, 'we can cut the Gordian knot of the Kailyard':

> The legacy of the Kailyard can be seen as a strength, not a weakness. If we understand the significance of the Kailyard as *popular* literature, we can validate the success of the Modernists, while repudiating the snobbery which has been expressed towards popular readers. Then at last we can see the Kailyard for what it is - an outright Scottish success.[3]

Dickson is on the right ground here but her model for Kailyard requires greater discrimination than she allows. Her use of the term creates its own confusions by falling into the same trap that has dogged all commentators - the assumption that Kailyard is a naturally occurring phenomenon rather than, as my introduction proposed, a critical concept. To label the popular literature Dickson discusses in her essay (principally the fiction of Annie S. Swan) as 'Kailyard' may well be helpful in understanding this work, provided that readers are prepared to alter their conception of the term along the lines she proposes. But arguably it just confuses things further, because the works which Dickson does *not* discuss (legitimately, given the scope of her essay) inevitably fall under the same all-embracing genre or context. Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren remain where they started, except we are now only to think of them as popular culture. And it is exactly this failure to distinguish effectively between individual writers which is the inevitable problem with Dickson's model, because as far as Barrie and Maclaren are concerned, her identification of Kailyard with popular culture is misleading. As this chapter will show, Barrie's fiction was never really seen as part of popular culture, whilst the case of Maclaren is considerably more complex than Dickson implies. Much of the immediate debate over Kailyard was motivated precisely because Maclaren's work was *not* seen as popular literature. One of the main reasons why Kailyard became

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[2] Beth Dickson, 'Annie S. Swan and O. Douglas: Legacies of the Kailyard', in Gifford and Macmillan (eds.), *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, 329-46, p. 329
[3] ibid. 334

such a heated issue in debates over Scottish literature was that because of the successful marketing and reviewing strategies which accompanied his work, Maclaren (like Crockett) was absorbed into discussions of serious literature.

It has become too easy to assign Kailyard exclusively to the realm of popular culture. Cairns Craig has written that to compare Kailyard with 'high' art is 'to make a simple category mistake.'[4] This is, however, an oversimplification, because categories were far from being simple at the time; Kailyard fiction appeared at a key moment in the emergence of a marked split between high and low culture. As Dickson has correctly pointed out, in 1895 (the year of Millar's application of the Kailyard term) 'the distinction between popular and literary fiction was unclear.'[5] In discussing popular fiction of the period 1860-80, R.C. Terry notes that there was a certain catholicity of taste amongst readers of fiction and a refusal to categorise novels on the part of both the reading public and reviewers.[6] By the 1890s this catholicity was splintering and the question of what constituted serious literature as opposed to mere popular success became a topic of heated debate. It is perhaps surprising, however, to find that Barrie's fiction did not really play much of a part in this debate - his work appeared to fit quite easily into the realm of serious literature. In support of his categorisation of Kailyard as popular culture, Craig points to the fact that '*The Little Minister* was three times made into a Hollywood film.'[7] It has become commonplace to think of this text as a work of popular fiction, but when it first appeared Barrie's novel was seen as one of the major *literary* events of the year. In a review of recent fiction in the *Fortnightly* in 1892, Francis Adams conducted his survey with a keen eye towards distinctions between one type of work and another. Passing from what he called 'the merely factitious and transitional branch of English fiction to the exiguous

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[4] CC, 107
[5] Dickson, 'Annie S. Swan and O. Douglas', 331
[6] R.C. Terry, *Victorian Popular Fiction, 1860-80* (London and Basingstoke, 1983), chp. 1
[7] CC, 107

domain of better and more serious work,' he noted that '"everybody" is reading either *The Little Minister* or *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.'[8] Posterity may make the grouping seem erroneous, but it is important to recognise that Barrie's fiction was highly respected in literary circles. George Meredith wrote to him in praise of this text saying 'I am comforted in seeing that work like yours is warmly greeted by press and public.'[9] Seven years later and in a letter to Aniela Zagorska, Joseph Conrad lists Barrie with Kipling and Meredith as among 'the writers who deserve attention' on the current literary scene.[10] Barrie's tremendous fall from critical grace into virtual obscurity after his death may well suggest that, in retrospect, writers and critics were simply in a stage of sorting out their hierarchical patterns and somehow placed Barrie in the wrong league. But whether the judgements were justifiable or not, what cannot be refuted is that Barrie's work was always understood by his contemporaries as serious literature.

So when discussing Kailyard within the context of popular culture we need to discriminate carefully amongst authors and pay particular attention to the publishing climate. We need to separate Barrie's work from the generalising term Kailyard and focus instead on Maclaren, because the real 'Gordian knot' of the Kailyard lies in the publishing history and marketing of his work. In the first half of this chapter I will trace Maclaren's career, showing how he typifies the newly emerging phenomenon of the best-seller. This will lead into a discussion of the editor William Robertson Nicoll who played a crucial role in Maclaren's success and was also responsible for igniting debate amongst critics and intellectuals about what should constitute serious Scottish literature.

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[8] 'Some Recent Novels', *Fortnightly Review*, 52 (July 1, 1892), 13-22, p. 17

[9] (December 3, 1891), *The Letters of George Meredith*, ed. C.L. Clive, 3 Vols (Oxford, 1970), II, 1051

[10] *The Collected Letters of Joseph Conrad*, ed. Frederick R. Karl and Lawrence Davies, 5 Vols (Cambridge, 1986), I, 138. A similar point is made by Stevenson when he wrote in a letter to Henry James (December 5, 1892): 'I am now reduced to two of my contemporaries, you and Barrie - O and Kipling!' *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, VII, 450

It has long been recognised that the publishing conditions surrounding Kailyard are crucial to understanding the phenomenon; indeed 'the *British Weekly* School' has often been used as a synonym for the term. It is, however, only Ian Maclaren whose literary career is indelibly tied to this newspaper. J.M. Barrie's novel of literary life *When a Man's Single* was serialised in the paper from October 1887 to March 1888 and earlier versions of about one third of the chapters in *A Window in Thrums* were first published there. But in his early career Barrie operated apart from and beyond the *British Weekly* and only in a very limited sense could he be said to be part of its world vision. William Donaldson, although accurately capturing the purpose of the *British Weekly*, is wrong to lump Barrie together within its ideological framework as he does at the end of his book *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*:

> The pietistic fiction of Barrie and Maclaren was intended as a contribution to the dilemma which called the *British Weekly* into existence, the acute crisis in English liberal nonconformism during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.[11]

If Kailyard is to be seen as originating in or with the *British Weekly*, then the link between Kailyard and Barrie is not only factually wrong, but unhelpful in understanding both the entire oeuvre of Barrie's fiction and what really might be understood as Kailyard. It is the career of Ian Maclaren which meets most of what have generally been accepted as the publishing characteristics of Kailyard.

William Robertson Nicoll, the editor of the *British Weekly*, was undoubtedly responsible for discovering, encouraging, publishing and marketing 'Ian Maclaren'. At the time when he was first approached by Nicoll, the Rev John Watson had been minister of the Presbyterian Free Church in Sefton Park, Liverpool for ten years. After trying on two separate occasions to get him to

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[11] William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland* (Aberdeen, 1986), 147. For a similar fallacious argument see A. Whigham-Price, 'William Robertson Nicoll and the genesis of the Kailyard School', *Durham University Journal*, 86:1 (1994), 73-82

contribute to *The Expositor*, the monthly theological magazine which he had edited from 1885, Nicoll met Watson in London and the seeds of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* were sown:

> I was so much struck by the racy stories and character-sketches with which Watson regaled us, that I suggested he should make some articles out of them.[12]

After a hesitation Watson agreed, and Nicoll's biography of the author goes on to show how he shaped and re-shaped his work according to Nicoll's desires. Nicoll found the first sketch he sent 'clever, but disappointing':

> I returned this to Watson stating objections. He sent a second sketch, also more or less unsatisfactory. Then he sent the first four chapters of what is now known as *The Bonnie Brier Bush* complete, and I knew on reading them that his popularity was assured.[13]

Editorial control and power was a norm with which all writers of the day were forced to cope, but this is clearly something else. Nicoll's working relationship with Maclaren establishes the key point that Maclaren did not set out to be a writer of fiction and was always a rather reluctant one. As Nicoll has stated, 'the fact is that he looked upon literature as a mere diversion from the actual work of his life, and did not consent either to stand or fall by it.'[14] He reported in an interview that he found himself 'in cordial agreement with every unfavourable review' and that he did not enjoy writing.[15]

I showed in chapter 3 that Maclaren's fiction contains an explicit religious structure. If to some extent he was merely using fiction as a mode of expression for his religious sympathies, then the *British Weekly* was the ideal site of publication. The political motivations behind the founding of this newspaper have been fully

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[12] W. Robertson Nicoll, *'Ian Maclaren': Life of the Rev. John Watson* (London, 1908), 165
[13] Ibid., 165-6
[14] Ibid., 182
[15] 'Ian Maclaren at Home. Interesting Interview', *Glasgow Evening Times* (September 28, 1896)

outlined by Roisin Higgins in an unpublished Ph.D. thesis.[16] Her study makes clear that although the paper was principally an attempt to capture the Liberal Free Church readership lost to the *Christian World* when it turned Liberal Unionist, and was thus a nexus of political, economic and religious factors, it was religion which provided the main force behind the project. Apart from aiming to unite the disparate nonconformist community, the paper was an attempt to reignite the importance of religion to British national life. As Nicoll himself said:

> I had always thought that religious papers did not give enough direct religious instruction, and that the leading articles should be mainly devoted to this, not to ecclesiastical matters or politics or literature chiefly, but to religion.'[17]

Given this mission statement it is clear why Maclaren appealed to Nicoll. What is not immediately obvious, however, is why Maclaren's fiction came to be identified as serious-minded literature as opposed to serious-minded sermons. Although the nature of Maclaren's theological vision promoted the universal appeal his fiction acquired, his success more specifically indicates an important trend of the contemporary fiction climate: the emergence not only of a markedly popular readership but of a widespread book-buying public that was to give birth to the concept of the best-seller and inevitably result in the backlash against popularity by such writers as Gissing, Conrad and others, who saw the success of authors like Maclaren as confirmation of the cultural decadence to which Britain had sunk.[18] If writers like Maclaren were popular, then intellectuals were forced to conclude that popular could not possibly mean good. But Maclaren's case is actually more complicated than this. As I shall go on to argue, his work was promoted by influential sections of the press *as* serious literature, creating an intense debate amongst many critics about what exactly constituted high art. Tracing the

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16 Roisin Higgins, 'William Robertson Nicoll and the Liberal Nonconformist Press, 1886-1923', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of St Andrews, 1995), vii-x

17 T.H. Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll: Life and Letters* (London, 1925), 81-2

18 see John Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses: Pride and Prejudice among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939* (London, 1992), esp. chp. 5 'George Gissing and the Ineducable Masses'

publishing conditions surrounding Maclaren's career can thus help illuminate some of the most important trends of the British literary climate in the 1890s, as well as explaining why Kailyard came to be such a heated topic of debate in discussion of literary culture in Scotland.

Once Nicoll had secured his author and Maclaren's first article in *The British Weekly* had appeared on November 2, 1893 (the piece was entitled 'How we Carried the News to Whinnie Knowe', and eventually formed the second chapter of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*) contributions continued at a decreasing rate: weekly for the first two months, then fortnightly for half a year, before settling down to a general rate of a sketch every three weeks until mid 1895 when the writing of *Kate Carnegie* and American visits made contributions more irregular and sporadic. Maclaren gradually came to be placed nearer and nearer the front of the newspaper and his sketches, which were advertised at the top of the front page, got longer and longer as the years went on. *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* was published in book form in October 1894 and *The Days of Auld Langsyne* in October 1895. As I showed in chapter 3, Maclaren gained a certain level of literary respectability with these two texts, receiving positive reviews in serious-minded periodicals like the *Academy* - who thought *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* 'artistically perfect' - the *Athenaeum* and the *Spectator*. For a while Maclaren became a writer in great demand. He made contributions to other journals, his *annus mirabilis* being 1895, which gives an indication of the immediacy of impact generated by *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. During that year stories were published in an array of journals: *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, *The Success*, *McClure's Magazine*, the *New York Bookman*, the *Living Age*, *Blackwood's*, *Woman at Home* (where he was a regular contributor) and *Outlook*. The latter journal exacted a total of six stories and essays in 1896 as well. Most of these journals were literary in orientation, suggesting that Maclaren's ambitions were not restricted to religious journals and newspapers, and his presence in *Blackwood's*

helps indicate the standing he soon acquired in literary circles. He did not seek to be published there but was asked to write a short story, an offer which was readily accepted: 'to be thought worthy of being a contributor is a great thing,' he wrote to William Blackwood,[19] but as it happened Maclaren was unable to fulfil his initial offer of a love story about the parish minister of Drumtochty and instead furnished *Blackwood's* with a piece which also appeared in the *Living Age* and was already due to be published in *The Days of Auld Langsyne* one month later.

Maclaren's general level of literary respectability contradicts the model of Kailyard offered by Thomas Knowles, who argues that Kailyard texts 'rank[ed] low on the literary hierarchy.'[20] If not considered a writer of the very first rank, Maclaren was definitely not being treated as merely a purveyor of a kind of fiction which was beneath the concerns of the literati. His career is nevertheless concurrent with a growing awareness of a perceived split between high and low culture as defined by the fiction and periodical market. The *British Weekly* began at a time when the number of religious periodicals was falling. Religious and family periodicals had traditionally carried fiction and were to continue to do so, but with the final breakdown of the monopoly held by the three-decker, the opportunity existed for the novel to assume different formats. In terms of its journalistic roots the event which Kailyard could be said to have benefited from most was the launching in 1881 of *Tit Bits*. This was a publication which encouraged small snippets of information to be consumed with minimum effort on the part of the reader. The kind of attitude taken towards *Tit Bits* by writers like George Gissing - in whose novel *New Grub Street* (1891) the paper was parodied - was as a result of a belief that fiction as an art form was being compromised by the need to conform to methods of publication that were now seeking to capture the newly literate

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[19] unpublished letter, John Watson to William Blackwood (April 10, 1895), National Library of Scotland, MS. 4640

[20] K, 16

masses. William Robertson Nicoll's activities as an editor were very much within the *Tit Bits* mould. When he decided to create a new magazine designed specifically for women, his mission-statement issued in the *British Weekly* identified exactly the vacuum which had opened up in the market:

> The quarterlies have slowly but steadily declined, and no editorial genius has been able to revivify them ... the *Woman at Home* will aim at being read from cover to cover.[21]

What might, at first, seem a rather ordinary aim was in fact an innovation: the quarterlies had gained the reputation for being impenetrable in their entirety. Nicoll was setting out a clear agenda which aimed to make *Woman at Home* a popular magazine but with earnest pretensions: 'We shall aim at selecting articles, stories, and paragraphs of universal interest, so that readers, whatever be their capacity or training, will be drawn on to read every line.' It was largely in this kind of publication that fiction was now being circulated. When Nicoll commissioned Maclaren to run a serial in the *Woman at Home* the author was flexible enough to abandon his hitherto largely male-centred emphasis on Drumtochty and tell a story about a young woman, *Kate Carnegie*. Maclaren's new story was thus produced and marketed within an explicitly popular paradigm, but there is a danger of making too broad a classification with regard to the cultural production of fiction in this era. The contribution to popular magazines was often a standard part of a novelist's apprenticeship. As Peter Keating has remarked

> viewed retrospectively, and conscious of the cultural fragmentation to come, the associations and conjunctions between novelists and periodicals at this time can appear startling. Conrad, Woolf and Joyce all submitted work to, and had it turned down by, *Tit Bits*.[22]

And it wasn't always a matter of stepping-stones either; as Nicoll, writing under his pseudonym of "A Man of Kent", wrote in the *British Weekly*: 'it is a sign of the

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21 *British Weekly* (September 14, 1893)
22 *HS*, 38

times that Mr Besant and Mr Rider Haggard are to publish their new novels in *Tit Bits* and *Pearson's Weekly* respectively.'[23]

However much writers were forced to tailor their work to specifically popular markets, most were nevertheless clear about their artistic vocation, and indeed the pressure imposed upon them often served, as in the case of Gissing and James, to make them only more acutely aware of it. But with Maclaren there is never any suggestion of an artistic vocation. His correspondence with Blackwood gives a glimpse of his impressions of himself as a novelist and shows clearly just how much of an amateur he regarded himself. At the time when he was approached by the magazine, Maclaren was beginning to plan *Kate Carnegie*, and commenting to Blackwood on his work, he wrote: 'it may turn out that I am not able to achieve a novel and am intended to be a short story teller - but I'll minimise that vista by making the serial a series of sketches with connection.'[24] His description sums up *Kate Carnegie* precisely, and from this point on the respectability of Maclaren's career as a serious artist fell away. It is indicative of the both the commercial safety and artistic respectability which he had acquired after such a short space of time that *Kate Carnegie* also ran simultaneously during 1896 in two American journals, the New York *Bookman* and *Outlook*. But whereas as a writer of short-stories he had been seen in some quarters as an artist of promise, *Kate Carnegie* revealed him as unable to fulfil that promise, and *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* and *The Days of Auld Langsyne* came to be seen as little more than a novelty vogue. After 1896 demand decreased and Maclaren is much harder to find amongst the periodicals. When he is it is usually when writing on theological issues, as in the continuing contributions to *Outlook* and the *North*

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23 "A Man of Kent", 'Rambling Remarks', *British Weekly* (May 3, 1894)
24 unpublished letter, John Watson to William Blackwood (August 14, 1895), National Library of Scotland, MS. 4640

American Review. The two stories published in the well-respected *Cornhill* in 1901 and 1903 were also religious in subject-matter.

Although he wrote on a number of more general topics, the only writings of Maclaren which ever received attention were his non-fictional religious publications and the Drumtochty sketches. *Kate Carnegie* was followed by *Afterwards and Other Stories* published in 1899 which, as Thomas Knowles has pointed out and discussed, draws mainly from urban settings. His final Drumtochty story, *Rabbi Saunderson*, appeared in the same year. After *Kate Carnegie*, however, and arguably even by it, Maclaren's vogue was over. Reviewing this work the *Critic* wrote that the man who was once 'the happy owner of a name which has been one of the literary huzzas of the moment' had been defeated by success: 'Ian Maclaren has been conquered that is all.'[25] After *The Days of Auld Langsyne* none of his work gained the critical attention it once had. Reviews of *Afterwards* and *Rabbi Saunderson* are sparse and on the whole negative. The original publication of the story 'Afterwards' did provoke a laudatory review by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in *McClure's Magazine* who announced, 'I am not afraid to prophesy that it will be loved and read for a generation of years,'[26] but Phelps was very much in the minority. Most critics were now less enthusiastic about Maclaren's sentimental methods and considered the quality of his writing to have deteriorated. The *Critic* took issue at the 'high-handedness of Ian Maclaren's methods'[27] and *Literature* was alert to the indiscriminateness of his approach:

> the stories seldom arouse an emotion or a thought in the reader's mind; and once read they fade away into the deep inane, leaving him nothing to ponder or to discuss.[28]

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[25] *Critic*, XXVII (January 30, 1897), 73-4
[26] Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, '"Afterwards": A Study of a Story by Ian Maclaren', *McClure's Magazine*, V (September, 1895), 329-32, p.329
[27] *Critic*, 34 (February 1899), 164-5
[28] *Literature*, IV (January 7, 1899), 21-2

Maclaren's other publications - *His Majesty Baby and some Common Men* (1902), an eclectic collection of previously published essays and stories, *St Judes* (1907), a collection grouped around the figure of Carmichael, a former minister from Drumtochty now undertaking work in a Glasgow parish, and *Graham of Claverhouse* (1908), his only full-length novel, based on the Covenanters - were barely noticed and are now hardly remembered. So far as his contribution to literature is concerned, Maclaren must be seen as a brief best-seller. But he is more than that. As I will go on to argue, what makes his case interesting is that because of the way his work was promoted through the editorial power of Robertson Nicoll, he was a best-seller who achieved an unlikely level of literary respectability during the period 1894-6. It was this respectability which was to lead to the attack on Kailyard by critics eager to strike a distinction between serious art and mere commercial success.

Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush and *The Days of Auld Langsyne* both sold prodigiously. According to the *British Weekly* nearly 130,000 copies of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* were sold in Britain and America within the first year[29] making it expedient for Hodder and Stoughton to run a large first printing of 30,000 copies of *The Days of Auld Langsyne*. Just how huge these figures are can be seen from a few comparisons. Mrs Humphry Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, the legendary best-seller, sold 70,500 copies through three differently priced editions from its publication in 1888 to 1891.[30] *The Little Minister*, the novel which really secured Barrie's reputation and finances, sold about 24,000 in its first fourteen months which, as Denis Mackail aptly summarises, was 'if not prodigious, then profitable without the slightest doubt.'[31] Both of these novels, however, *The Little Minister* somewhat anachronistically, were first published as three-volume novels, and Maclaren's

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[29] *British Weekly* (October 31, 1895)
[30] Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago and London, 1957), 386
[31] Mackail, *The Story of J.M.B.*, 185

success certainly owed much to his work being available in a published form which encouraged purchase rather than library-borrowing. As Peter Keating makes clear, the modern 'best-seller' developed not from authors consciously writing down to the newly literate audience but from a reduction in the standard price of novels which made it possible for books to be bought in huge numbers.[32] Like Du Maurier's *Trilby*, which sold 80,000 within three months of publication in 1894,[33] Maclaren's early works were published in the 6 shilling, one-volume format. According to Keating 'in terms of sales a best-seller meant anything in excess of about 50,000 copies.'[34] When writing Maclaren's biography in 1908, Nicoll noted that 256,000 copies of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* had been sold in Great Britain and 484,000 in America, not including pirated editions.[35] The book was eventually to top a million. Hot on the heels of this success came translations into French, Dutch and German and a dramatisation drawn from the two works by James McArthur called *The Bonnie Brier Bush*.[36]

Maclaren's status as a best-seller is more than simply a matter of good sales, however. The 1890s was the era which conceived the concept 'best-seller' and did so not so much because books needed to be organised according to sales, but because a term was needed to define a new type of author: one who had sincere and earnest intentions in their novel-writing but focused these on the moral rather than the artistic sphere; one whose fiction was usually escapist but at the same time affirmative of absolute moral values; and one who had a personality cult generated around him or herself. As Q.D. Leavis has summarised, the key point to this literature was that 'bad writing, false sentiment, sheer silliness and a

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[32] *HS*, 423
[33] Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 386
[34] *HS*, 424
[35] Nicoll, *'Ian Maclaren'*, 168
[36] The programme for a production in San Francisco on September 22, 1902 is held in the National Library of Scotland, and a performance at the St. James's theatre London is reviewed overwhelmingly negatively by Max Beerbohm in 'A Load of Weeds from the Kailyard', *The Saturday Review* (December 30, 1905), 838-9

preposterous narrative are all carried along by the magnificent vitality of the author.'[37] And that vitality was to become translatable into non-literary spheres. This is the beginning of the age of fan-mail and for the first time authors were being encouraged to appear before the public in a speaking capacity. There is no better example of this facet of the late Victorian best-seller than Ian Maclaren.

The last quarter of the century witnessed some important changes in the way authors were presented to the public. The advent of publications like *Tit Bits* and *Pearson's Weekly* initiated a vogue of magazines, newspapers and periodicals aimed at the general reader, which although they did not carry literary criticism were nevertheless intensely interested in authors. The profession of authorship became more and more taken into the public eye. As Keating has summarised, 'what anyone connected with books did or looked like became newsworthy.'[38] A letter from Barrie to Arthur Quiller-Couch brilliantly captures the tenor of the times. Writing from Kirriemuir in 1893 he remarks, 'I see from the papers that I am in Switzerland with Maarten Maartens. Hope I'm enjoying myself.'[39] *The British Weekly* was one of the many papers to adopt this practice of 'literary gossip' as Nicoll termed it, and Barrie in particular was always hot news: 'Mr Barrie is on the Suffolk coast, working at his novel'; 'Mr Jerome K. Jerome and Dr Conan Doyle have just returned from their Norwegian trip. Mr Barrie did not accompany them'; 'Mr and Mrs J.M. Barrie have returned to London and will proceed to Kirriemuir shortly.'[40]

Whereas the news of Barrie always showed him escaping from the public eye, the reports of Ian Maclaren indicate very clearly how he was brought irresistibly before it. Whether it be his opening a bazaar in Barrie's home town of

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[37] Q.D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public*, 1932 (Harmondsworth, 1979), 62
[38] *HS*, 74
[39] December 25, 1893, *The Letters of J. M. Barrie*, ed. Viola Meynell (London, 1942), 5
[40] 'Rambling Remarks', *British Weekly* (September 1, 1892; September 8, 1892; September 20, 1894)

Kirriemuir; his lecturing on 'Certain Traits in the Scottish Character' at Grindelwald; his speaking at Badenoch and Laggan, the YMCA in Stirling, or in any number of places and situations, the public were told about it. Excerpts from his sermons given as visiting speaker to churches across Scotland were reprinted, and on his return from America a series of 'American Impressions' were published in both the *British Weekly* and in the American journal *Outlook*. Giving lectures was a standard practice for the best-selling author and as Peter Keating notes, generally authors 'talked not on the art of fiction or the importance of symbolism in literature but on the meaning of life.'[41] Of course being a minister Maclaren was likely to do this - he was, after all, used to it and this was the purpose he envisaged for his fiction anyway - but what is important is that even if only for a short time Ian Maclaren the man became as significant a presence in the reading world as Ian Maclaren's work. Even a writer like Rudyard Kipling, so temperamentally and artistically different from his contemporary, announced in a letter that 'I should much like to have met Ian Maclaren.'[42]

Nowhere was the impact of Ian Maclaren the man felt more than in his visits to America. Thomas Knowles has shown how Barrie, Crockett, and particularly Maclaren were regularly at the top of the American best-seller lists in the 1890s, and has explored some of the likely reasons behind their transatlantic vogue.[43] One of these was clearly the volume of Scottish emigrants, and when Maclaren undertook a series of lecture tours throughout America the organisers played on the nostalgic strain such audiences readily demanded. Maclaren noted in an interview that he was often introduced as '"an old friend, whom we all knew well"'[44] and a contemporary article on the author reported that 'the people,

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41 *HS*, 444
42 Rudyard Kipling to Moberly Bell (July 21, 1897), *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling*, ed. Thomas Pinney, 4 Vols (Basingstoke, 1990), II, 306
43 K, chp 3.
44 'Ian Maclaren's impressions of America: an interview', *British Weekly* (December 31, 1896)

especially the settlers from Bonnie Scotland, thought it a very little thing to travel two or three hundred miles, to hear the man who could write so exquisitely of the land of Wallace and Burns.'[45] Although most of his lectures consisted of readings from his work, Maclaren also preached, and spoke on Burns and on Scottish life and character. Major Pond, the organiser of the tour, was reported by Nicoll as saying that Maclaren was 'in greater demand than any foreigner who has ever come to America, not even excepting Stanley.'[46] Given this, it is perhaps not surprising that Maclaren even got to lunch with the President. Nicoll reported that the receipts of the three lectures he gave in Chicago were 'not below 8,000 dols'[47] and Maclaren's church in Liverpool itself became a pilgrimage for American tourists.

None of this was true of Barrie, and Knowles makes an important error in his chapter on Kailyard and America. He comments that Barrie and Maclaren both made 'overwhelmingly successful promotional visits' to America, but this is one area where the difference between Barrie and Maclaren in terms of an author's attitude toward his public is revealing. Barrie undertook no tours of promotion; instead, all his visits to America were holidays where the only work he did was to begin small-scale negotiations with American theatrical gurus.[48] This error of fact has passed into general consciousness and is found in many references, enabling critics to distort things entirely. John Caughie, for example, links Barrie with Harry Lauder as someone who openly promoted the 'stifling' "kailyard" mythology' through being 'almost as popular on the American lecture circuit' as was Lauder on the stage.[49] Nicoll reported that Pond had offered Crockett £6,000 for a lecture series like Maclaren's and that Barrie, too, had been invited to 'deliver from eighty

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[45] Cora B Pearson, 'Ian Maclaren. A Study of the Man and His Work', *Temple Magazine*, V (1901), 659-64, p.660
[46] 'Rambling Remarks', *British Weekly* (August 13, 1896)
[47] 'Rambling Remarks', *British Weekly* (November 26, 1896)
[48] K, 66
[49] 'Representing Scotland: New Questions for Scottish Cinema', in Eddie Dick (ed.) *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book* (Edinburgh, 1990), 13-30, p. 16

to a hundred lectures in America, but the proposal [had] been respectfully declined.'[50] Barrie was *never* to give lectures in America and when G.W. Cable gave a report of his time in America in *Symposium*, he wrote: 'I doubt if anyone ... had any revealing converse with Mr Barrie as to his views on the literary art or his methods of writing.'[51]

It was exactly this prevailing demand for authors to speak of their 'views on literary art' and provide details of their 'methods of writing' which characterised the celebrity status they were now holding in the public domain. In terms of the relationship between author and audience, it was the personalised interview which was undoubtedly the most important innovation of the age. Henry James referred in his notebook to 'this age of interviewing'[52] as newspapers and magazines seized on what was an American invention. According to Peter D. Macdonald, 'the most famous exponent of the genre in the 1890s was Raymond Blathwayt,'[53] who interviewed Maclaren for *Great Thoughts*.[54] Maclaren and Crockett revelled in the newly developed form of the personal interview and examples of their willingness to exhibit themselves to the reading public can be found throughout the whole corpus of Victorian magazines and periodicals. The following was typical of the approach taken when these authors were featured:

> That which is true of the heather and the hills or the flowers of the valley, of a rare jewel or an exquisite miniature without their dainty settings, is undoubtedly true of the man of genius - it is in the surroundings of his home, and among his own people, that his character shine brightest.[55]

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[50] 'Rambling Remarks', *British Weekly* (September 9, 1897; July 16, 1896.)
[51] G.W. Cable, 'A Visit from Mr Barrie', cited in *British Weekly* (December 24, 1896)
[52] *The Notebooks of Henry James*, ed. F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock (New York, 1947), 180
[53] Peter D. Macdonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice* (Cambridge, 1997), 8
[54] Raymond Blathwayt, 'A Talk with "Ian Maclaren"', *Great Thoughts*, XXX (January, 1899), 288-90
[55] Pearson, 'Ian Maclaren. A Study of the Man and his Work', 659

In such an article as this on Maclaren which appeared in *Temple Magazine* there is no discussion of literature, only background information about the author - his home life, ways and habits. A similar article in McClure's Magazine was accompanied by 'photos of "Drumtochty" from the new edition of *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, and there were many others showing Maclaren or Crockett seated at their desk or reading in their libraries.[56] Writers became celebrities, and the extent of the personality cult which some authors acquired can be illustrated by an anonymous poem which was printed in the *British Weekly* about 'three maidens' seeing S.R. Crockett getting off a train. The final two stanzas run:

> Then one of them suddenly started,
> And exclaimed in a whisper low,
> "It's Crockett himself! S.R. Crockett!
> We heard he was coming you know."
>
> And gazing forgetful of manners,
> They watched till he drove away,
> And one wrote in her diary that evening,
> "We saw S.R. Crockett to-day."[57]

As what Henry James called the 'mania for publicity'[58] took hold over the literary world, reticence on the part of authors became valorised in higher circles as an indication of artistic superiority - Conrad, in particular, became famous for shying away from the public eye. In view of the sustained attack on Barrie's supposed over-developed sense of commercialism, it is perhaps surprising to find that he too resisted the mania. He wrote to Quiller-Couch in 1894:

> McClure's magazine dogs me as if it wanted my hand in marriage. There must be a mistake about Gilbert Parker. I only met him once (and liked him enormously) but remember no talk

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[56] 'Dr. John Watson - "Ian Maclaren"', *McClure's Magazine*, VII (October, 1896), 387-400. See also James Ashcroft Noble, 'Ian Maclaren at Home', *Woman at Home*, III (March, 1895), 511-21; David Paton, '"Ian Maclaren" at Home', *Sunday Magazine*, XXV (1896), 37-42; 'Ian Maclaren at Home. Interesting Interview', *Glasgow Evening Times*, (September 28, 1896); 'A Day with Ian Maclaren', *Sunday Strand*, 1 (1900), 32-9; 'Ian Maclaren. A Character Sketch', *Young Man*, XV (July, 1901), 217-20

[57] *British Weekly* (August 30, 1894)

[58] *HS*, 74

> on any such matter. He wrote about interviewing me for this magazine, and I declined. Never shall man or maid interview me.[59]

Nine years later and Barrie is writing 'I do not care to be photographed', in response of an offer from the editor of *Motoring* and turning down a proposal of an article on him from Bram Stoker on the account that 'I dislike articles about myself.'[60] These instances are an important refutation of a widely held image of Barrie as a commercially motivated author. Even as perceptive a critic as Christopher Harvie has unfairly and inaccurately classified Barrie as 'a pioneer product of the literary industry of agents, bestseller strategies, and advertising campaigns.'[61] The reason for this misrepresentation is, once again, the readiness to see Barrie within the critical context Kailyard, because Harvie's words are certainly apposite so far as Crockett and Maclaren are concerned. Crockett's literary career was strongly dictated first by Edward Garnett, who was the most famous example of the new breed of publishers' readers, and then A.P. Watt, an equally successful example of the equally pioneering literary agent.[62] When Barrie met Crockett, he recorded his impressions of the man with a disparaging tonal force:

> Crockett was with us for a week-end. 'His terms are' - 'he sells' - 'Watt says' - 'his publishers say' - 'his terms' - 'his sale' - But otherwise he is all right and kindly and oh, he is happy.[63]

There is something reminiscent of Gissing in that final remark, with its hint that the true artist cannot possibly be 'happy' like the hack. For Barrie, the pursuit of good financial terms was not on the agenda.

The reason why Kailyard acquired such an important legacy in discussions about Scottish literature is not simply explained by the commercial success of

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[59] Barrie to Arthur Quiller-Couch (January 3, 1894), *The Letters of J. M. Barrie*, 5
[60] (August 5, 1907), ibid. 55
[61] Harvie, 'The Barrie Who Never Grew Up', 322.
[62] see Dorothy W. Collin, 'Edward Garnett, Publisher's Reader, and Samuel Rutherford Crockett, Writer of Books', *Publishing History*, 30 (1991), 89-121
[63] Barrie to Quiller-Couch (March 23, 1896), *The Letters of J.M. Barrie*, 10

Crockett and Maclaren, however. If their work had been no more than a popular success, Kailyard would probably not have retained the lasting cultural significance it has; what really roused the ire of the Scottish intellectuals was that even if only for a short time, their fiction became a critical as well as a popular success.

THE ATTACK ON KAILYARD

Commenting on Ian Campbell's book *Kailyard* in a supplement to *Scottish Literary Journal*, David S. Robb posed a question which remains as pertinent now as it did in 1983:

> The question seems to me to be, not, why is kailyard writing so poor and why is so much Scottish literature tainted by its tendencies, but why was it ever mistaken for really serious and important Scottish literature?'[64]

The answer lies in the promotion of Crockett and Maclaren as high art and the subsequent reaction against this by critics and future writers and intellectuals. It is this promotion which explains why the fiction labelled Kailyard has been afforded a place within the literary tradition of Scotland instead of being forgotten as a momentary event of best-selling novelty. Without the systematic promotion of this fiction by William Robertson Nicoll, the term Kailyard would probably never have acquired the lasting notoriety it has.

William Robertson Nicoll is the key figure in the publishing history of Kailyard fiction. A former Free Church minister, Nicoll gained a reputation for having a controlling influence in the dissemination of opinion in the literary world. In the words of Dixon Scott:

> Every Thursday, in the *British Weekly*, Sir W. Robertson Nicoll addresses an audience far more numerous, far more responsive, far more eagerly in earnest, than that controlled by any other living

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[64] *Scottish Literary Journal: Supplement No. 19* (Winter, 1983), 31

> critic. He praises a book - and instantly it is popular. He dismisses one, gently - and it dies. He controls the contents of a bookshelves of a thousand homes - they change beneath his fingers like bright keyboards - and every alteration means the modification of a mind. What Claudius Clear reads on Wednesday, half of Scotland and much of England is reading before the end of the week[65]

Scott may be guilty of overstating the case a little here, but Nicoll's criticism of authors rebounded far and wide and produced a series of attacks from a number of writers which helped to establish the negative image surrounding Kailyard.

Nicoll had earnest reasons for wanting to promote Crockett and Maclaren's work; as Thomas Knowles has shown he had a strong commitment to the ethical importance of literature and he shared the same social and religious opinions as his authors. He saw Maclaren's work as a worthy alternative to the naturalism and sensationalism he so disliked in fiction. Writing in the *British Weekly* he stated that 'there is a reaction in favour of what is pure, and true, and of good report, which the Scottish idyllists have met and satisfied as no other writers of the day have been able to do.'[66] He devoted almost an entire front page of the *British Weekly* when reviewing *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, claiming that 'from the artistic point of view it is an unquestionable and marked success.'[67] Maclaren was considered to be 'unsurpassed by any living writer' in the gift of pathos.' Similarly, *The Stickit Minister* was held to give its author 'a very high place among his fellow artists,' and Nicoll reported in his review of the work that 'one is tempted to say that Mr Crockett is a man of genius.'[68] When he reviewed another Crockett novel over two years later he was still making extravagant comparisons, suggesting that 'if anyone wishes to understand why Mr Crockett is so popular, and why it is well he should

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[65] Dixon Scott, *Men of Letters* (London, New York and Toronto, 1927), 205
[66] 'Correspondence of Claudius Clear', *British Weekly* (April 11, 1895)
[67] *British Weekly* (October 11, 1894)
[68] *British Weekly* (April 6, 1893)

be popular, let him do as I did - read "The Men of the Moss Hags" and follow it immediately with the last instalment of Mr Hardy's "Hearts Insurgent."'[69]

Nicoll was very much aware that not everyone was likely to agree with his assessment of Crockett and Maclaren, and he attempted to validate their achievement further by repeatedly claiming that their work was difficult to produce. In a letter published in the *British Weekly* entitled 'To a Writer of Scottish Idylls', he replied to an author who had sent him some of his work. It is impossible to say whether the letter is genuine or merely a careful publicity gimmick, but whatever the case, Nicoll was clearly setting out to refute the claims that were now being made that it was all too easy to write 'Scottish idylls':

> I have read the idylls you sent me and now return them ... To write such sketches appears to a Scotchman the easiest thing in the world. They are short, they are full of dialect, they depict a life with which one is perfectly familiar, and they require no elaboration of plot. When you read in the newspapers of the immense circulation and fame which some Scottish Idylls have achieved, you are apt to imagine that the writers have found the easiest way to the top which was ever revealed to man. When the experiment is made, it will be seen that no kind of work is more difficult than theirs.[70]

The first sign of a Scottish-based attack against the implications of the marketing methods of Nicoll came from the article which first applied the term Kailyard - J.H. Millar's piece in the *New Review* in 1895. Amongst other things, Millar attacked the way Crockett was 'almost wholly the result of the modern method of reviewing':

> Not only has he enjoyed the benefit of the ingenious system of log-rolling consistently practised by a portion of the so-called religious press, but many other newspapers and reviews have conspired to overwhelm him with fulsome and exaggerated flattery.'[71]

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[69] *British Weekly* (September 26, 1895)
[70] 'Correspondence of Claudius Clear', *British Weekly* (April 11, 1895)
[71] Millar, 'The Literature of the Kailyard', 393

These sentiments were echoed by John Buchan in an article published in the same year in the *Glasgow Herald*. Although Buchan's piece was entitled 'Nonconformity in Literature' he was not concerned with religion. He used 'nonconformity' to mean the needless striking after novelty which he believed characterised the literature of the age. His focus was wide-ranging. He moved from an attack on naturalist fiction to what he saw as its opposite, 'the school whose gospel ... is that of the "ultra-sane" and utterly wholesome.' Singling out Crockett as his only example he drew attention to what he saw as the inappropriate categorisation of this work as high art:

> Idylls of humble country life have lately grown upon us thick and fast; charming pieces of literature many of them; nigh perfect in their narrow sphere ... But some gentlemen of the press, whose interest is to puff such books, do not let the matter rest here. These unpretentious and delightful volumes are gravely set above work with which they are scarcely even comparable.[72]

The criticism was not lost on Nicoll who responded in the *British Weekly* by combining notice of the article with a short review of Buchan's *Sir Quixote*:

> I hope Mr Buchan will some day do some good work, and meanwhile he need not trouble his head about the Scotch school. The little finger of the least of them is as yet much thicker than his loins ... in the matter of conformity to Crockett, he can never be surpassed.[73]

Buchan's article had concluded with a view of artistic production characteristic of its age. Calling Crockett at his worst 'only a boisterous talker,' he wrote: 'no man, however high his spirits and rich the life within him, can hope to be a great writer save by the restraint, the pains, the hard and bitter drudgery of his art.' The ease with which certain writers seemed to be able to achieve financial security contributed to this alternative image of the 'true' artist compelled, like Reardon in Gissing's *New Grub Street*, to labour on in financial ruin in the service of his art.

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[72] John Buchan, 'Nonconformity in Literature', *Glasgow Herald* (November 2, 1895)
[73] 'The Correspondence of Claudius Clear', *British Weekly* (November 7, 1895)

Buchan had his revenge on Nicoll when he portrayed him satirically in one of his novels, *Castle Gay* (1930).

The attack on Crockett here is not the typical Scottish attack on the way Scotland is represented, but on what qualifies as serious art, and it was this point that was the key issue for many contemporary Kailyard commentators. Buchan's objections to the puffing of Crockett and Maclaren were repeated with greater vigour by a writer in the Glasgow *Evening Times* signing himself 'Rix'. Writing on January 6, 1897, 'Rix' declared the Kailyard to be in decline and proceeded to attack it on a number of counts. He was concerned about the future understanding of a Scottish literary history or tradition. To him there was a danger that a lot of second-rate material would become indelibly marked on such a tradition, and posterity has proved his words accurate. In a prophetic statement, he wrote:

> Most readers must be weary of the outworn word itself, as they are of the class of writing for which it stands. But the word has become part of the language, and will probably survive the books which it connotes[74]

What 'Rix' is concerned about here is what will come to represent Scotland and to stand for Scottish Literature. Implicitly, his article is a call to action - a call to shape the outlines of a Scottish literary tradition and reject the Kailyard, which, as I will show in the next chapter, was a policy exactly similar to that of Hugh MacDiarmid. 'An article in the *New Review* began the good work,' 'Rix' continues, 'although it was responsible for the word kailyard, which deserves now to be completely pensioned off.' Significantly, he is quick to exclude Barrie from the refuse of his hatchet job, considering him to have been 'brought, somewhat unfairly, into the same gallery.' Apart from a sideswipe at the sentimentality of Maclaren's readers, his attack on Crockett and Maclaren was twofold: firstly on the stereotyped representation of Scotland, and secondly on the artificial puffing of

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[74] Rix, 'The Slump in Kailrunts', *Glasgow Evening Times* (January 6, 1897)

these writers by sections of the press. The first point is where he differs from Buchan and is an early example of what was to become, as we have seen in previous chapters, a standard response from Scottish critics:

> the kind of lecture which was received by the Scotch press with derisive laughter, is accepted in the states as gospel. It is delivered by a man who has actually lived among the ideal people he describes. What further proof of its verity can any American want? ... At first Scotland did not concern itself with the kailyard writers. These gentlemen worked for the English market. But when this country saw how completely England had been gulled, it could not forbear to smile

The second point precipitated a short exchange of letters between 'Rix' and Nicoll which strikes at the heart of one of the key issues in understanding the significance of Kailyard. Rix wrote:

> As for Mr Crockett and Ian Maclaren, their absurdly inflated reputations were made by an ingenious system of log-rolling, whose perfect construction and success in working are without parallel in modern literary records. But the public has awakened to the fact that a statement is not necessarily accurate because it happens to appear in a "religious" paper.

Nicoll replied in the *British Weekly*, quoting 'accurate and verified figures of sales for 1896' that amounted, when the 'three best known of these writers' were taken into account, to 'over half a million.' Given this, Nicoll argued that 'articles about the slump might perhaps in the circumstances be held over' and proceeded to offer a general defence for kailyard:

> Nobody says that these Scotch books have made anyone think less of Scotland; nobody can say that they have done anything to corrupt the minds of their readers. They have made everywhere for tenderness, for purity, for a higher standard of life.[75]

'Rix' replied, stating explicitly that he held 'The Man of Kent' and 'Claudius Clear' (Nicoll's transparent *nom de plumes*) as responsible for the puffing of Crockett and

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[75] A Man of Kent, 'Rambling Remarks', *British Weekly* (January 14, 1897)

Maclaren. His response reveals clearly the difference in opinion between the two critics over what constituted literary success:

> "A Man of Kent" asks if I "can tell him of anything in the least degree comparable in contemporary literature." I frankly admit I cannot tell him of anything in the least degree comparable in contemporary bookselling ... Why this perpetual dragging in of America? And why this continual harping upon sales, as if they formed the first and last tribunals before which all authors must come?[76]

Nicoll, in a further response, hinted that writers like Buchan and Rix were motivated in their hatred for Kailyard primarily by jealousy.

In discussing whether good sales should be seen as an indicator of literary value, the debate between Nicoll and 'Rix' is characteristic of its age. What is surprising is that it is a writer in an evening newspaper who is adopting the cultural high ground. The following month saw an unsigned article in the same newspaper which made a further contribution to the debate. Reporting on recent trends in American bookselling, the *Evening Times* asked why so much room was afforded to Maclaren:

> A singular fact is that while "Kate Carnegie" is declared to be the most popular book in the states, the leading American critical paper "The Critic" finds the story disappointing, says that Ian Maclaren has been defeated by success and epitomises thus: "Kate Carnegie is a jaded book." Still it heads the list.[77]

As I have already mentioned, to many cultural theorists of the time, good sales necessarily indicated artistic compromise. In his discussion of 'the literary field in the 1890s', Peter Macdonald makes the debate over sales and literary value his guiding principle. Discussing the writings of Edmund Gosse in particular, he shows how to many authors 'cultural democratization *necessarily* entailed devaluation:'

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[76] 'Rix', '"A Man of Kent" and the Slump in Kail-runts', *Glasgow Evening Times* (January 21, 1897)
[77] 'What America Reads', *Glasgow Evening Times* (February 20, 1897)

> When *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) was anonymously attacked in the *Saturday Review*, he [Gosse] told Hardy the review was probably the work of some 'ape-leading and shrivelled spinster' and reassured him that 'you have strengthened your position tremendously, among your own comferes and the serious male public.'[78]

Such a judgement forms part of what John Carey has argued was the 'response of the English literary intelligentsia to the new phenomenon of mass culture.' Carey argues that 'modernist literature and art can be seen as a hostile reaction to the unprecedentedly large reading public created by late nineteenth-century educational reforms.'[79] As I have been arguing, Nicoll differed from the modernists in that he wanted to work with the new reading public, and was thus keen to find works of literature which, whilst being ethically sound, could appeal to the masses. The 'Scottish Idyllists' were, for him, the best example.

Nicoll has received considerable attention for his political, religious and moral outlook. What has been less documented is the serious ambition he held in the literary sphere. Of course his morals, politics and religious beliefs affected his opinions on literature, but he was greatly interested in the history and development of English literature in itself. As literary adviser to the publishers Hodder and Stoughton, he was the main influence in leading them away from their almost exclusive devotion to ecclesiastical literature, towards producing a substantial amount of fiction and poetry. Furthermore, as I will go on to discuss, his launching of the *Bookman* in 1891 represents a major attempt to shape the literary culture of Britain. Yet even within the pages of the *British Weekly* Nicoll comes across as more than just a fastidious moralist - literature and writing were easily his most favoured subjects. As befitted a newspaper magnate, he conceived of literature as a trade. In a series of articles he wrote under the title 'Advice to the Literary

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[78] Macdonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice*, 8
[79] Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses*, preface.

Aspirant', he recommended writers to send in what the editor wanted and to 'begin by aiming very low.'[80] For Nicoll, sales indicated success and it was bad authorship if a writer refused to compromise with the market:

> When you see a man put out one difficult book after another with a circulation steadily sagging, with a spirit inflamed and rebellious, you see a tragedy. One such, whose name I will not mention died among us lately. He had, I think, a far more genuine literary gift than many who were popularly successful, but he stiffened and hardened and went to the wall. Of course, if a man cannot condescend to a certain style of writing and cannot bring over the public to like his style of writing, it is best for him to give up authorship.[81]

It would be wrong to suggest that Nicoll held sales as the only criterion for the judgement of literary value, or, indeed, be too absolute in assessing his literary tastes - for all his rejection of naturalism and his outspoken faith in the ethical importance of literature, he did, for instance, admire Gissing.[82] But in the debate which took place in the 1890s over the commercialisation of literature there is absolutely no doubt on which side he stood. In his column in the *British Weekly* for July 16, 1896, he set out his idea of literary value. 'What makes a Novel successful?' he asked himself:

> By successful I mean circulation. I do not mean favourable reviews, or the good opinion of a select but limited class ... I sometimes see in reviews of Scottish books that high praise is accompanied by the high certificate "This is not in the Kail-yard style of Ian Maclaren and Crockett." This may or may not be altogether pleasant to the author criticised. What it means is that he gets a certain number of friendly reviews in superior papers, and that his book struggles on to seven hundred copies or so, while the remaining three hundred appear much knocked about and linger for a long time as remainders on the bookstalls.[83]

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[80] quoted in *People and Books*, from the writings of W. Robertson Nicoll (London [1926]), 78
[81] ibid. 81
[82] Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll*, 99
[83] 'Correspondence of Claudius Clear', *British Weekly* (July 16, 1896)

There is a certain amount of self-flattery in Nicoll's career, and the Scottish attack on his reviewing methods continued from other writers. In his critical book published in 1897, David Christie Murray drew attention to the strong contingent of Scotsmen swarming the British press and spoke of 'the boom which has lately filled heaven and earth with respect to the achievements of the new Scottish school.' Like Millar and Buchan before him, he singled out Crockett, remarking that 'the unblushing effrontery of those gentlemen of the press who have set *him* on a level with Sir Walter is the most mournful and most contemptible thing in association with the poorer sort of criticism which has been encountered of late years.' Murray added a further assault with regard to Maclaren, saying that 'here is another case where the hysteric overpraise of the critics has done a capable workman a serious injustice.'[84]

The most scathing attack on Nicoll came in T.W.H. Crosland's scathing attack on all things Scottish, *The Unspeakable Scot* (1902). It seems certain that animosity towards Nicoll alone drove Crosland to his unflinching diatribe, but it is easy to miss the importance and specificity of what he is saying beneath the unabashedly racist rhetoric found throughout the book. His satirical attack on Nicoll's editorial characteristics is worth quoting in full as an accurate portrait of what really took place in the pages of the *British Weekly*:

> Any author who is doing well - that is to say, any author whose record of sales entitles him to be considered a success - may always reckon on a large hospitality in Dr. Nicoll's journals, and will always find Dr. Nicoll and his merry men beaming round the corner and hat in hand. It is a matter of what would you like, sir? all the time. Are you spending your holiday cruising on the blue Mediterranean in the Duchess of Puttleham's yacht? Very good. Paragraph in the column signed "Man of Kent," with a delicate reference to your last great novel. Have you projects? Equally good. Mr So-and-So is, I understand, hard at work on his next great novel. Will your new book, 30,000 copies of which have been

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[84] David Christie Murray, *My Contemporaries in Fiction* (London, 1897), pp. 111, 100, 108. See also Neil Munro *The Looker-on* (Edinburgh, 1933), 278

> sold before the day of publication, make its appearance on April 1? Capital. Send us portraits of yourself at all ages from three months to the present day, pictures of the modest tenement in which you were born, and of your present town-house and little place in the country, and, bless your heart, we will do the rest. Do people say that the great novel, of which you have sold fifty million copies in England and America, is a pot-boiler and a failure? Dear, dear me! You have our heartiest sympathies sir, and if you would like to vindicate your character as an artist in a couple of pages in the *British Weekly*, why, my dear sir, they are at your service.[85]

Crosland went on to map out a clear reason for his resentment towards Nicoll's methods:

> I do not say that there is any terrific harm in this species of enterprise. That it pleases the mass of mankind and therefore sells papers goes without saying. On the other hand it is quite subversive of the best interests of letters.

It was as a result of the success of publications like *Tit Bits* and those fronted by Robertson Nicoll that the question of what was 'the best interest of letters' became such a heated topic of debate.

Nicoll's most lasting intervention in this debate and his most successful attempt to shape the literary culture of his age came with the launching of the *Bookman* in 1891. This magazine remains a neglected landmark in Victorian publishing and was responsible for carrying Maclaren and Crockett further into a paradigm of high art. Set up and run by Nicoll, it soon became not only 'the most widely read literary periodical in Britain'[86] but one which also achieved considerable status as a serious-minded literary magazine. It was the first successful magazine of its kind devoted entirely to literature, and Maclaren and Crockett were afforded as privileged a place within its covers as any other contemporary novelist. Nicoll's aims, as they were in *Woman at Home*, were specifically to fill a gap in the market:

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[85] T.W.H. Crosland, *The Unspeakable Scot* (London, 1902), 65-6
[86] *HS*, 338

> My experience is that there is a great class of literary aspirants whose wants are met in no way. Then a great many like to know about books and to be guided, but they don't wish it more than once a month, and they can't wade through reviews like the *Athenaeum* and *Academy*. Who can read a complete number of either?[87]

The *Bookman* would aim to meet this need by focusing exclusively on literary topics. Like *Tit Bits* and the *British Weekly* and so many other journals and papers of the age, it was well-filled with sections of literary gossip, 'News Notes' and short paragraphs about authors, publishers and booksellers. What made it different was its retention of the primary emphasis on book reviewing which had previously been the domain of publications like the *Athenaeum* and *Academy*. When in 1895 advertisements began to appear in the magazine declaring it as 'the only monthly magazine entirely devoted to the interests of literature' we must note the confident claim to knowledge of what 'the interests of literature' were supposed to be. Nicoll's aim was not to take literature down to the masses but to try and lift them up to it by making it more accessible. The failure of *Literature*, the forerunner of the *TLS*, to make any impact in the market - set up in 1897, it had folded by 1901 - illustrated the areas where the *Bookman* succeeded. It was never aimed at a scholarly or academic readership yet it acquired considerable literary respectability. Writers were not embarrassed to be associated with it like they generally were *Tit Bits*, it boasted amongst its contributors some of the most important writers and critics of the day: Hardy, Pater, Chesterton, Barrie, Quiller-Couch, Lang, Besant, Swinburne, Lionel Johnson and George Saintsbury. Perhaps the most significant name is that of W.B. Yeats who contributed reviews and essays to each of the first ten numbers apart from the very first. In spite of what was to come in the shape of modernism, writers and commentators were conscious of literature's changing

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[87] Quoted by Darlow, *William Robertson Nicoll*, 98

audience appeal and were perhaps more prepared to work within these developments than their various subsequent myth-making strategies might suggest.

As easily the most widely read literary magazine of the day, the *Bookman* was crucial in disseminating opinion. Both Maclaren and Crockett were given full-length, six page articles and featured in the supplements that were issued with each volume on leading nineteenth-century authors. In this context they were grouped not only with contemporaries like Meredith, Ruskin and Hardy, but with Austen, Scott and Dickens as well, and were thus identified as an integral part of the British literary tradition. It was this inappropriate elevation of what was clearly second-rate work into the realm of high art which explains why Kailyard has a foot in both camps and why the seemingly harmless kitsch has provoked such outrage amongst the intellectuals. The timing is crucial. As Colin McArthur has mentioned, 'the immense popularity of the Kailyard novels in the UK and the USA ensured that they would rapidly become cinema fodder'[88] and take their place in the realms of popular culture. But their absorption into the realm of high art also ensured that they would form part of the Scottish literary tradition - or what was understood as the tradition - from which subsequent writers would work. Once the goal posts had been shifted and categories made more clear, Maclaren was easily forgotten within British circles as little more than a late Victorian best-seller. Within exclusively Scottish circles, however, his work had become part of what was seen as the Scottish literary tradition, and the term Kailyard was fixed as the co-ordinate around which twentieth-century writers would understand their cultural heritage. The implications of this situation will be the subject of the following chapter.

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[88] Colin McArthur, 'Scotland and Cinema: The Iniquity of the Fathers', in McArthur (ed.), *Scotch Reels*, 40-69, p. 42

VI

THE CRITICAL KAILYARD

> 'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in a rather scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean - neither more nor less.'[1]

This thesis has argued that the critical term Kailyard was applied because critics and intellectuals were becoming more concerned with the way Scotland was being represented to an international audience. The employment of the term as a defining device in the shaping of literary history has meant that from 1895 onwards, the issue of representation has been built into the critical parameters available for the evaluation of Scottish writing. The importance of the term is therefore how it can be seen to have facilitated discussion about Scottish literature along certain lines and blocked off others (not least those which might lend themselves to a more illuminating appreciation of what J.M. Barrie was really doing in his fiction). Kailyard's role has been to foster a critical stance which has prioritised the issue of how Scotland is represented and how writers articulate their Scottishness.

Hugh MacDiarmid's contribution in consolidating this stance is crucial. When setting out his agenda for a Scottish renaissance in *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, he used the word Kailyard as a defining device, employing the term whenever he wanted to make a swift categorisation of the kind of Scottish writing he rejected. His attack on Kailyard fiction turns on a paradox. Whilst it had been argued ubiquitously in literary circles that Kailyard indicated a revival in Scottish literary activity, MacDiarmid still considered Scottish literature to be existing in a 'denationalised rut.'[2] The representation of the nation offered by Kailyard fiction

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[1] Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 1872, ed. Roger Lancelyn Green (Oxford, 1971), 190

[2] *CSS*, 50. All future references are embedded in the text.

was for him based on a false awareness of what constituted Scotland's individual literary distinctiveness:

> It is lamentable to find Scotland still so largely preoccupied with what is conventionally regarded as Scottish literature, the mindless vulgarities of parochial poetasters and the cold-haggis-and-gingerbeer atrocities of prose Kailyardism. (42)

MacDiarmid's rejection of Kailyard was thus part of his attempt to create a new idea of Scotland by wiping away the existing one. 'Renaissances do not grow in Kailyards' he wrote in the *Dunfermline Press* in 1923,[3] and in *Contemporary Scottish Studies* he aimed to bring to the attention of the public 'Scottish poets wholly outwith the Kailyard tradition such as Robert Buchanan and John Davidson' (50). The Kailyard term here, as elsewhere, grows out of a desire or need to construct a sense of tradition, and tradition is an important word in MacDiarmid's critical lexicon; it rebounds throughout the *Contemporary Scottish Studies* and was as significant a term to him as it was to Edwin Muir - their disagreement arose because of their conclusion.

MacDiarmid agreed with Muir in considering the Scottish writer handicapped in being unable to wholly absorb the English tradition, writing, for example, that 'the subtle failure' infecting Violet Jacob's 'Anglo-Scottish novels' was 'the writer's insufficient naturalisation in the tradition of the English novel' (33). Indeed a passage in his account of R.B. Cunninghame Graham, where he discusses Scottish writers in general, could easily be mistaken for Muir:

> Driven out into alien cultures, deprived of the possibility of devoting themselves to a distinctive tradition equivalent to their distinctive natures as Scotsmen, their force is to some extent at least dissipated. They might, had there been a separate Scottish tradition, as there is, for example, a separate English and a separate French tradition, have risen in it to a first rank in comparative literature - but without that, forced to fit into a foreign tradition,

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[3] (May 12, 1923) repr. Hugh MacDiarmid, *The Raucle Tongue: Hitherto uncollected prose*, Vol.1, ed. Angus Calder et al (Manchester, 1996), 46.

> they are handicapped by being unable to bring to it all the essential qualities and further handicapped by being unable to entirely rid themselves of qualities extraneous to that tradition, and the consequence is that they are restricted to second or third rank. (37)

For MacDiarmid, Scotland's failure was not the failure of individual writers, but the failure of a country to generate its own sense of tradition. In discussing literature within the context of tradition, MacDiarmid was forming part of a climate influenced in the main by one seminal text: T.S. Eliot's essay 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (1919). It was this work which did so much to promote the importance of tradition in literary discussion and evaluation. Eliot argued that an individual text could not acquire value, or a writer maturity or significance, unless they formed part of an ongoing tradition. Muir and MacDiarmid both base their critical agenda on this theory, although their conclusions are opposite. For both critics, Scottish writers are parochial because there is no tradition into which they can fit. For Muir there is only one possible conclusion to the problem. In *Scott and Scotland* he wrote:

> a Scottish writer who wishes to achieve some approximation to completeness has no choice except to absorb the English tradition, and that if he thoroughly does so his work belongs not merely to Scottish literature but to English literature as well. On the other hand, if he wishes to add to an indigenous Scottish literature, and roots himself deliberately in Scotland, he will find there, no matter how long he may search, neither an organic community to round off his conceptions, nor a major literary tradition to support him.[4]

By contrast, MacDiarmid believed that Scottish writers must commit themselves to resisting the pressure of Anglicisation and re-create the 'separate Scottish tradition':

> Scotland, like any other country, must have its contribution to *welt-literatur* assessed in respect of its independent creative values and vehicles - not by what it has in common, technically and otherwise, with other literatures: but by what is peculiarly, or, at any rate, primarily, its own. (70)

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[4] Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (London, 1936), 15

The issue for both Muir and MacDiarmid was the autonomy of Scottish culture. They were concerned about whether Scotland could sustain itself culturally and remain independent of Anglicising influence. The key point, however, is that although they differ on what the nature of the tradition should be, both critics suggest that a writer cannot be completely fulfilled unless he or she identifies his or her work within a tradition defined along lines of national criteria. It is to the significance of this point which this chapter will be devoted, because the use of the term Kailyard in twentieth-century Scottish cultural criticism helps expose how articulation of national identity has been elevated rather inappropriately as a benchmark for the evaluation of Scottish writers.

MacDiarmid's attitude towards nationality turns on an apparent paradox: that there was such a thing as a distinctive Scottish national quality, and that this national quality was what allowed literature in Scotland to have a universal application. His position is best illustrated in an article he wrote on the poet James Pittendrigh Macgillivary. Here, once again, he uses Kailyard to refer to a false tradition based on a false sense of national identity:

> Despite certain superficial similarities he has nothing whatever in common with any of the amazing array of mediocrities represented in the endless series of volumes of Mr. D.H. Edwards' *Modern Scottish Poets* - all of whom were dreadful examples of the excesses of self-parody into which imitative post-Burnsianism has been forced under conditions of progressive Anglicisation. Macgillivary's work, constitutionally incapable of being affected by Anglicising influences, remains free from any such distortion and degradation. The consequence is that it does not appear Scottish at all to those accustomed to wallow in the obviousnesses of Kailyardism: while, on the other hand, it is so far removed from stock-conceptions of what is Scottish, as to be for the most part inappreciable by any non-Scot. For foreign, and especially English, readers it can only be seen in its true aspect once the independent literary traditions of Scotland are re-established in general estimation as a distinctive department of *welt-literatur*, and effectively purged of the denationalised elements which have been progressively obscuring and corrupting them for the past hundred years or more. (48)

For Macgillivary's work to be properly appreciated in an international sense it must be seen within a national tradition. Thus for MacDiarmid national traditions are important because it is only through them - and not through any other tradition such as class or religious traditions - that *welt-literatur*, the paradise of synthesis, can be achieved. That MacDiarmid should have held these opinions owes much to his immersion in Russian philosophy and literature. The many allusions to Dostoevsky in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* rise to a climax in the section at lines 1640-58 where MacDiarmid says for Scotland what Dostoevsky said for Russia; that the Scottish people are '*Narodbogonosets*' (God-bearers) and that Scotland 'sall fin oot its destiny' which is 'In workin' oot mankind's great synthesis.'[5] His whole philosophy thus turns on the importance of the nation in effecting the synthesis of mankind. This is why he argued in response to Edwin Muir that a Scottish writer's work 'cannot be proceeding along the lines calculated to enable him to express himself and realise his artistic potentialities most fully unless it offers an unmistakable practical equivalent - in contrast if not also in form and language - of the difference in psychology and cultural background between any Scot and any Englishman' (97).

There are immediate problems with this agenda. Firstly there is the question of feasibility. Is it possible for a twentieth-century Scottish writer to be, as MacDiarmid says of Macgillivary, 'constitutionally incapable of being affected by Anglicising influences.' Is it possible, in other words, to work entirely within Scotland's independent creative values and vehicles? To do so would involve rejecting the English culture to which MacDiarmid believed Scotland had become subordinated and dependent upon. This involved getting back to Dunbar, the poet MacDiarmid believed representative of the age when Scotland, free from 'Anglicising influences', made an independent contribution to World Art. Kailyard

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[5] *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, ed Michael Grieve and W.R. Aitken, 1978 (Harmondsworth, 1985), 134-5

was the term he used to define the willing acceptance of cultural dependency - in *A Drunk Man* he laments the way Dunbar has been 'owre the Kailyaird wa' flung' (727). The term stands here for a tradition which is in effect not a Scottish tradition at all but part of the English tradition. Macgillivary, by contrast, should be seen beyond Kailyard, as part of the 'independent literary traditions of Scotland.' MacDiarmid's attempt to cast out of history the various ways in which Scottish culture and English culture have inter-penetrated is, however, as much divorced from reality as Kailyard fiction is claimed to be. A modern cultural theorist versed in the powerful arguments of Mikhail Bakhtin will be able to argue that a nation's culture is constructed precisely *through* interactions with other cultures.[6] Of course MacDiarmid was keen on internationalism and on interacting with foreign literatures - in his seminal essay 'A Theory of Scots Letters' (1923) he made many comparisons between Scotland and Russia - but his claim for the existence of a Scottish psychology entirely different from English psychology is an act of enforced wishful-thinking laced with a blatant blend of racism. Scotland and Scottish identity in 1923 had been affected by its engagement with English culture and vice versa, and MacDiarmid's failure to take into account what Bakhtin calls 'this dialogic encounter of two cultures'[7] is one of the weakest components of his cultural criticism.

The second main problem with MacDiarmid's agenda is definition. Exactly what constitutes the 'difference in psychology and cultural background between any Scot and any Englishman?' Although teasing out the question of what Scotland was is absolutely central to MacDiarmid's poetry, the reflexive nature of that poetry - the fact that it is about the creative process itself - makes it necessary that the question is never answered.[8] 'No man can state the truth of Scotland' he wrote

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[6] see Robert Crawford, 'Bakhtin and Scotlands', *Scotlands*, 1 (1994), 55-65
[7] quoted in ibid. 59
[8] On this point I follow the thesis of W.N. Herbert in *To Circumjack MacDiarmid: The Poetry and Prose of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Oxford, 1992), who argues more fully than any other critic that

in his poem 'The Kulturkampf.'[9] In his criticism, however, where we might have been entitled to an element of definition, MacDiarmid failed to elucidate, preferring instead to continue to define by difference, suggesting that Scotland's individual psychological identity was simply that which was not Kailyard and not English.[10] The nearest he got to providing a systematic definition was in his adoption of the theories of G. Gregory Smith, author of the book *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*. In 'A Theory of Scots Letters' MacDiarmid seized on Smith's idea of the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', claiming that the 'great vital characteristic of Scottish literature'[11] was what Smith phrased as the 'antithesis of the real and fantastic' which were 'the polar twins of the Scottish muse.'[12] In what was perhaps his most explicit comment on the issue, MacDiarmid stated that 'the essence of the genius of our race, is, in our opinion, the reconciliation it effects between the base and the beautiful, recognizing that they are complementary and indispensable to each other.'[13] What MacDiarmid really took from Smith, however, was less a set of ideas about what constituted the Scottish literary character than a certain validation that Scotland should be thought to have a separate literary character. Although he clearly utilised the idea of the antisyzygy in *A Drunk Man* and built it into his central aesthetic of being 'whaur extremes meet', it was what Robert Crawford has termed the 'nationalistic, Scoto-British, anti-Arnoldian current' evident in Smith that really appealed to MacDiarmid.[14] Here was endorsement of MacDiarmid's belief that Scotland had a separate, autonomous literary tradition there for the uncovering.

MacDiarmid's primary subject matter is the creative process itself.

[9] *Complete Poems*, 695

[10] The letters sent to the *Scottish Educational Journal* reprinted in Riach's edition of *Contemporary Scottish Studies* show this to have been a recurring contemporary criticisim of the series of articles.

[11] 'A Theory of Scots Letters', repr. *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Prose*, ed. Alan Riach (Manchester, 1992), 19

[12] G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (London, 1919), 20

[13] 'A Theory of Scots Letters', 22

[14] Robert Crawford, 'Scottish Literature and English Studies', in Crawford (ed.), *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1998), 233

Gregory Smith is becoming widely recognised as an important figure in determining the theoretical approach to Scottish literature which took root in the twentieth century. In the concluding chapter to *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*, Smith repeated the main thrust of his discussion. Was it not merely of 'historical interest' to talk of a Scottish literature? Didn't 'modern conditions' signify that as an entity Scottish literature simply didn't exist?

> The literary historian finds, as he passes from Hume to Sir Walter, that it is increasingly difficult to segregate his "Scottish" writers, and that he has often no better excuse for a label than the accident of birth or residence, or the choice of subject or dialect. The public of to-day does not trouble itself about the matter, except when, roused by the accent of Drumtochty, it convinces itself that it hears the "true Scottish note."[15]

The only visible tradition was the 'accent of Drumtochty' - the Kailyard - and on that issue Smith was unequivocal. If an independent Scottish literary tradition was to be detected then, he decided, 'we rule out the whole company of "stickit ministers" and all the things done and said within reach of "bonnie brier bushes."'[16] The debate over the Kailyard here is the larger debate over whether Scotland can be said to have an independent literary tradition. It is this debate which MacDiarmid takes up and which also formed a point of departure for both T.S. Eliot, in his review of Smith's book, and Edwin Muir.[17]

MacDiarmid thus encouraged a literary criticism which set out to uncover a distinctively Scottish tradition, which, inevitably, would be understood as containing different characteristics from the English tradition. Much of MacDiarmid's ideas have been accepted rather uncritically as a base for the act of literary criticism, and it is here that the problem of using the term Kailyard lies,

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15 Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature*, 276
16 ibid. 277
17 On Eliot and Gregory Smith see Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford, 1992), 254-9

because it can only ever lead to a narrow assessment of the individual writer. As Peter Zenzinger has suggested, "'Not Burns, Dunbar!" is a valid maxim for someone trying to define his own aesthetic programme [but] as a maxim for the literary critic it is more than questionable.'[18] The most important problem created by MacDiarmid's critical agenda lies in his prioritising the issue of national identity in the assessment of individual writers or texts. By arguing that 'that which is most truly nationalistic is also most universal in its appeal' (42) he raised articulation of national identity as criteria for literary profundity. Under his cultural theories, writers who do not prioritise the issue of nationality in their art cannot be seen as realising their 'full artistic potentialities.' One of his main criticisms of J.M. Barrie was that 'so far as Scottish literature is concerned, Barrie has long severed any effective connection he ever had with Scottish life or thought' (17), and in his criticism of what he called the 'Anglo-Scottish novels' of Violet Jacob he charges her with 'not going about her proper business:'

> The proper business of any Scottish imaginative writer is to found or to further a Scottish - not an English - tradition. (33)

For MacDiarmid, writers should direct their energies towards national identity because it is the fundamental component of their imaginative capability. There are clear problems in promoting an aesthetic which valorises nationalism or Scottishness *in itself* as an essential virtue, and yet the influence of MacDiarmid's thinking on the course of Scottish literary criticism in the twentieth century has been significant. In his book *Literature and Oatmeal* (1936), William Power echoed MacDiarmid's arguments precisely, asserting 'that only in Scots themes could a Scots writer really find himself,'[19] and the effect of critical assumptions like this has been to facilitate comments such as Thomas Crawford's on Hogg, to take just one example, where he declares a poem to be 'profoundly Scottish;' a remark

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[18] Peter Zenzinger, 'Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Scottish Literary Criticism', in Horst W. Drescher (ed) *Nationalism in Literature* (Frankfurt am Main, 1989), 143-154, p. 150

[19] William Power, *Literature and Oatmeal* (London, 1936), 149

which is to elevate an always unspecified idea of nationality into a discourse of meaningless hyperbole.[20] An important question this chapter will discuss is whether articulation of national identity is an appropriate base from which to evaluate individual writers and texts. Should national psychology (assuming it exists) be the central paradigm for the discussion and understanding of imaginative literature?

If MacDiarmid did not really set out a full account of his critical agenda, we can nevertheless see how such an agenda might work when put into practice by looking at Kurt Wittig's *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*. Wittig took up MacDiarmid's challenge of finding what was 'distinctively Scottish in the deepest sense' (*CSS* 351). He proceeded from the agenda that certain recurring motifs or themes used or explored by Scottish writers must indicate what constitutes 'specifically Scottish' values, and that this in turn should allow the presence of such Scottish values to be detected through literary history. The circular method of this critical approach follows MacDiarmid in being designed simply to confront the fear that Scottish identity may be being eroded and a separate autonomous Scottish literature may no longer exist. What it amounts to is simply looking for, and valorising, instances where Scottish writers seem to work independent of English traditions. Such an approach results in a heavily selective view of both individual writers and cultural periods. The twentieth-century novel, for example, is respected because, unlike its nineteenth-century counterpart, it is 'peculiarly Scottish and springs from the soil of the Scottish tradition.'[21] Similarly, Wittig provides no discussion of 'Stevenson the stylist' because 'this was part of his European background;' instead links with Dunbar are made in order to show his debt to the ongoing presence of the *Scottish Tradition in Literature*.[22]

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[20] Thomas Crawford, 'James Hogg: The Play of Region and Nation', in *HSL 3*, 89-106, p.92
[21] Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*, 257-8
[22] Ibid. 323

The writing of Scottish literary history has been dogged by this tendency to incorporate into discussion only those works which confirm the thesis being put forward. Those authors who have either predominantly used the English language (Drummond, Boswell, Thomson) or conducted their literary career within British cultural markets (Carlyle, Barrie) have been marginalised or pronounced unScottish. So, for instance, Wittig states that 'as is obvious ... Barrie's plays must rather be regarded as a contribution - certainly a very fine one - to English rather than to Scottish drama.'[23] Canonical judgements like these proceed from the MacDiarmid-inspired assumption that it is necessary and desirable to identify an indigenous Scottish tradition operating independent of Anglicising influences. It is from this assumption, for example, that a certain amount of uneasiness has arisen from making the point that the strength of Burns's poetry lies in his mingling of English and Scots and that he does not simply live out his Scottishness spontaneously in his verse. Wittig's search for pre-defined criteria appears almost comically flawed and inevitably reductive because it prevents him from assessing writers on anything other than national criteria. His conclusion - stating that in the work of Gunn Scottish literature is 'national yet knows no national limitations'[24] - follows MacDiarmid in assuming that to be national is the way to be universal, and that it is only through dealing with their national identity that writers completely fulfil themselves.

The MacDiarmid/Wittig view of Scottish literature argues that the only works which need be discussed within the paradigm of Scottish literature are those which foreground issues of national identity, and there is no better illustration of the restrictiveness of this critical approach than J.M. Barrie. Canons are inevitably and necessarily selective but it is unusual to find one which consciously excludes an author's best work and includes his weakest. In *The Mainstream Companion to*

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[23] Ibid. 312
[24] Ibid. 339

Scottish Literature, Trevor Royle offers separate entries for two of Barrie's works: *Auld Licht Idylls* and *The Admirable Crichton*. Neither the novel which first catapulted Barrie to stardom (*The Little Minister*), nor any of his three longer and more ambitious novels, nor what is arguably his finest prose work (*Farewell, Miss Julie Logan*), nor even his most famous play (*Peter Pan*) stand by their own right as part of 'Scotland's own very distinctive voice as reflected in its national literature.'[25] The inadequacy of this situation is exacerbated by the fact that Royle accepts that the writing he does not discuss represent the strongest part of Barrie's achievement. A similar pattern is offered in the construction of the Aberdeen University Press *History of Scottish Literature*, which provides a negative reception of the early work (within the context Kailyard) and finds no way of accommodating detailed discussion of the later novels or the plays. Virtually all histories or surveys of Scottish literature have followed the same path. Barrie, contextualised in a negative paradigm, gets a bad name before his best work is even considered, if, indeed, it is at all. For all the work of Leonee Ormond and R.D.S. Jack in providing more open and comprehensive critical judgements, in terms of writing literary history we remain stuck within the same parameters. Although the later works are briefly discussed in Roderick Watson's much admired one-volume history, the chronological table at the back of that book represents Barrie's fiction only by *Auld Licht Idylls* and *A Window in Thrums*. Similarly, Marshall Walker, in the most recent literary history, lists just these texts and *The Little Minister* and *Margaret Ogilvy*. As far as Scottish literary history is concerned, the *Tommy* novels and *The Little White Bird* have no place.[26] If these accounts of Barrie were accompanied by positive assessments it might not be so misrepresentative, but as it is the critical practice here is analogous to dismissing Shakespeare as a weak writer through only reading *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*,

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[25] Royle, *The Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature*, viii

[26] Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland* (Basingstoke, 1984); Marshall Walker, *Scottish Literature since 1707* (London and New York, 1996). Watson discusses the *Tommy* novels in one short paragraph in the main body of his text; Walker does not mention them at all.

or declaring Beethoven a poor composer through only hearing the First Symphony. Something is inherently wrong with our critical parameters if we make judgements like these. The continued use of Kailyard as an unexamined term and a viable contextualising category within which to discuss individual writers and texts is what allows such self-inflicted, narrow and damaging conclusions. But it is crucial to stress that it is the natural progression from MacDiarmid's assumption that Scottish writers can only fully realise themselves within Scottish themes and that when charting Scottish literary history we must look only at those texts where individual writers foreground national distinctiveness.

These canonical trends are by no means restricted to the Victorian period. R.D.S. Jack has repeatedly shown how anthologies and histories of Scottish literature marginalise the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[27] Works which are not written in Scots or works which do not confront what are accepted to be Scottish themes have always had a complicated relationship with Scottish literature as it is understood as a discrete entity. Yet writing on Scottish themes is an inadequate basis on which to make evaluations, because exactly what constitutes those themes will in itself be a dynamically evolving phenomenon. Exactly where is the line drawn between what is a Scottish theme and what is not? It would, for instance, be possible to argue that Stevenson's European heritage (that part of his work which Wittig openly neglects) *reflects* his 'Scottishness' rather than negates it, in that Scotland has, historically and culturally, always held close links to continental influences. Jack has suggested much the same for Drummond of Hawthornden, who despite his not writing in Scots, was 'every bit as much of a nationalist; every bit as much a product of his own literary/cultural imperatives' as Robert Burns.[28]

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[27] introduction to *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature*, ed. Jack and P.A.T. Rozendaal (Edinburgh, 1997), vii-xxxix

[28] R.D.S. Jack, 'Burns as Sassenach Poet', in Kenneth Simpson (ed.), *Burns Now* (Edinburgh, 1994), 150-66, p. 151

The alternative paths offered to the Scottish writer by Muir and MacDiarmid have, until very recently, been seen as the only available way of understanding Scottish literary history. However, as I have already suggested, in a fundamental sense they proceed from the same assumption: that a Scottish writer looks to their nationality before anything else and that it is the task of the Scottish critic to uncover a national tradition. Where Wittig's book might be seen as MacDiarmid's theory in practice, those by David Craig and John Spiers rely on Muir's model. In contrast to MacDiarmid, Muir came to the conclusion that the linguistic, political and social state of Scotland prevented a separate, autonomous literature from existing. The problems involved in thinking in terms of 'autonomous' or 'separate' literatures have recently been exposed, however, by critics like Cairns Craig and Robert Crawford, who have shown how the whole idea of 'tradition' has been crucial in the organising of literature into core and marginal cultures; an organisation which controls the way we read.[29] Muir's presentation of Scottish culture as a failed culture depends upon the idea that English culture is successful because of its continuous and autonomous tradition. But as Cairns Craig shows, the construction of the English tradition - the core culture - is itself not only made by provincials (the American, Eliot, in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent') but composed of provincials (the American, James, and the Pole, Conrad, in Leavis's *Great Tradition*). Under this structure the core culture is able to soak up the input of marginal cultures and claim it as its own, leaving the marginal culture impoverished of its most talented individuals. One of the most thought-provoking passages in Craig's critique is his imaginative reversal of the English/Scottish literary relationship:

> imagine if we were to claim that Dickens' *Hard Times*, for instance, was really a work of Scottish literature because it is so influenced by Carlyle; or that *Wuthering Heights* really belongs with the nineteenth century Scottish novel because of the influence of Scott,

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[29] CC, 14-20 and passim; Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, passim.

> and its evident closeness, in narrative technique, to Hogg's *Confessions*. Incorporations like these won't work: only the core culture is allowed a perspectival tradition that entitles it to incorporate everything into itself that is required to prove its fundamental continuity.'[30]

The continuity and autonomy of the English tradition is a myth; dependent for its very existence upon impulses from the marginal culture. The structuring of literature in terms of autonomous national traditions is thus exposed as abstract and contradictory, but our understanding of Scottish literature has generally proceeded along such lines. David Craig frames his book *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People* by arguing that Scotland cannot be said to have produced a 'mature', '"all-round"', or 'separate literature.'[31] It is exactly these terms which are investigated and undermined by Cairns Craig in *Out of History*. He argues that the core culture achieves its claims to superiority by insisting that 'wholeness', 'coherence', and 'continuity' are the 'definitions of a successful culture.'[32]

For Edwin Muir, the key issue was wholeness. Muir's argument turned on the belief that Scottish writers were insupported by a distinctive Scottish community. 'Only a people can create a literature,' he argued, and because a writer like Scott was not born into 'a genuine organic society such as England,' Scotland cannot be said to have a literature.[33] I showed in my introduction how it was the representation of an organic society that contemporary Kailyard critics were so anxious about; here Muir puts the failure of representation down to the failure of organic society itself: without an homogenous language, the Scottish writer was unable to express 'the response of a whole people, emotional and intellectual to a specific body of experience peculiar to it alone.'[34] To speak of wholeness is to assume that it is possible to bring together elements into some sort of unity which

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[30] CC, 19
[31] David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*, (London, 1961), 14
[32] CC, 20
[33] Muir, *Scott and Scotland*, 12-13
[34] Ibid. 19

is 'Scotland,' and Muir was suggesting that such a conceptual view was no longer possible. It was not possible to create a whole by reflecting the experience of the people and therefore not possible to express what was peculiar to the experience of that whole people. Scotland's problem as a nation was its lack of unity and Scottish literature both reflected and was a consequence of that lack of unity.

This is another instance where Muir's and MacDiarmid's opinions coincide. It was precisely this perceived lack of unity which led MacDiarmid to consider Scottish literature denationalised. Chapter 5 of his autobiography *Lucky Poet* is entitled 'On seeing Scotland Whole' and consistently stresses the need for Scottish writers to try and understand their country. In lines 723-50 of *A Drunk Man* he applies Nietzsche's maxim 'become what you are' not to the individual but to Scotland.[35] However much he may have rejected the prescription, MacDiarmid would not have argued with the principle behind Muir's closing statements in *Scott and Scotland*:

> it is of living importance to Scotland that it should maintain and be able to assert its identity; it cannot do so unless it feels itself a unity[36]

Unlike Muir's, MacDiarmid's unity is polylingual and the quarrel between the two writers was over what constituted the unity. The general need to envisage Scotland as a unity or a whole, however, is deeply embedded in the creative and critical writing of the renaissance authors. As Berthold Schoene has written, 'from our postmodern perspective it is easy to identify the major flaw of the Scottish Literary Renaissance, which lies in its construction and maintenance of Scottish national identity as a fixed value system of typical characteristics mistaken for archetypal, natural givens.'[37] But the validity as creative enterprises of MacDiarmid's attempt

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[35] This was an action which had already been prescribed in 'A Theory of Scots Letters', 28
[36] Muir, *Scott and Scotland*, 182
[37] Berthold Schoene, 'A Passage to Scotland: Scottish Literature and the British Postcolonial Condition', *Scotlands*, 2:1 (1995), 107-122, p. 114

to *Circumjack Cencrastus*, or Grassic Gibbon's projection of Chris Guthrie as Chris Caledonia navigating her way through Scottish village and city, should not entirely be dismissed. The transferral of such a quest to identify a monolithic national myth as authentic identity to the practice of literary criticism, however, seems the more significant and potentially damaging manoeuvre, not least because it shifts agency away from the individual writer to some abstract entity 'Scotland.' What MacDiarmid and Muir suggest is that some kind of force which is 'Scotland' will have to rise up and achieve unity if Scottish literature is going to become a recognisable phenomenon. The individual writer slips out of the picture, becoming nothing more than a mouthpiece for an abstract force by which s/he is inevitably assumed to be essentially part of and conditioned by. S/he becomes a part standing for the whole - a metonymy. And the imposition of a metonymical status on the individual writer or text runs deep in Scottish cultural criticism and goes to the heart of the critical problem surrounding the term Kailyard.

I showed in my introduction how J.H. Millar's critique of Barrie turned not on his realism itself but on the status of his work as representative of the overall image of Scottish culture. Hugh MacDiarmid's negative response to *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk* follows the same concerns, finding it inimical to the interests of 'Scottish *national* culture' (44 italics added). These are criticisms which judge the individual writer as a representative part of a greater whole, and exactly how this approach can feed into a vision of Scottish literary history can be seen by looking at David Craig's Marxist-based study *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*. Craig's controlling thesis is that 'no literature can exist without embodying the human nature and habits of life actually there in the country it comes from.'[38] Taking into account the 'life of the people,' Craig thus claims to be able to separate the 'real' idiom of Scottish literature from the 'fake.'[39] Consequently the nineteenth

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[38] Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*, 72
[39] Ibid. 11-12

century is dismissed as fake because it failed to reflect prevailing social conditions. According to Craig, in Kailyard

> social life is brought exclusively inside the range of country ways and values, and these values (as in S.R. Crockett, J.M. Barrie, or Iain [*sic*] Maclaren) become more and more unreal as the main initiative of the nation sets in from the towns.

But of course (ignoring for the moment the fact that Maclaren wrote some stories based in Glasgow) these country values are only unreal in so far as they represent Scotland. Craig imposes a metonymical status on the individual writer or text: a Scottish writer must allow their work to stand for Scotland. Kailyard is 'unreal,' 'fake,' not truly Scottish, because its values are not 'inclusive' (100); they do not reflect the values of the *whole* of Scotland; they do not embody a *whole* culture. Craig's ultimate conclusion is that this can only mean that Scottish literature in its native tradition ceases to exist: 'the end of the 19th century was reached and still an aware Scotsman could not feel that his country had found its literature.'[40]

The same conclusion of failure is reached by John Spiers in *The Scots Literary Tradition*. Spiers argues that 'there can be no modern Scots literature if there is no modern Scots spoken language' and his book is thus an account of literature in the Scots language. Despite this focus, Spiers decided to include a discussion of *The House with the Green Shutters*, and in the preface to the 1962 edition of his book, he defended his canonical decision:

> I wanted to include a book to represent nineteenth-century Scotland - or, more specifically, to indicate some of the things that may have gone wrong with nineteenth-century Scotland and that might explain why it did not achieve a literature.[41]

What follows is an account of 'the clarity of the social criticism' offered by Brown's novel, and Spiers' implies that it is only when a literature offers 'social criticism'

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[40] Ibid. 148
[41] John Spiers, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism*, 1940 (London, 1962), 19

that it could be said to exist - to have been 'achieved.' Spiers, like David Craig, thus structures his history or tradition in terms of Scotland's failure of organicism - Scotland's continuous national literary tradition broke down, finally, in the nineteenth century. But as Cairns Craig has stated, 'models of Scottish culture as fragmentary failure or false unity [are] the product not of the failed nature of Scotland's past but of the failure of the definitions of culture into which we are trying to shoehorn it.'[42] And it is the transferral of agency from the individual writer to the entity Scotland which creates this problem. Both David Craig and Spiers place agency not on the individual writer but on the country - it is 'Scotland,' not the Scottish writer, who cannot 'find' or cannot 'achieve' a literature. The effect of this transferral of agency has been to highlight the concept of authenticity in Scottish cultural criticism, and although they differ in approach, David Craig and Spiers both structure their literary histories in the same way as Wittig: by claiming to be able to judge what is authentically Scottish and then reading that criteria back onto individual writers, finding them 'real' or 'fake'. Although, as my first chapter showed, critics of Scottish culture had been concerned with the representation of the nation in literature from the early nineteenth century, authenticity as a crisis issue dates from the birth of the critical term Kailyard, when a marketed image of Scotland leapt from the confines of a British newspaper into the newly emerging mass cultural market, establishing once and for all the imposing demand on the individual Scottish writer to articulate his or her national identity, and to do so within realistic terms.

Authenticity has been a recurrent word in this discussion and lies implicit in the Kailyard term, which furiously dismisses certain works as being inauthentic. Yet as a critical benchmark authenticity is useless because it is always in need of defining criteria to make it applicable. It is also a clever word, in that it carries

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[42] CC, 110

clear connotations of truth, yet etymologically is descended from the same root as 'authority'. Whoever decides what is authentic is probably whoever is in authority, and in terms of Scottish literary criticism a very great cultural authority has been rather uncritically conceded to MacDiarmid and his followers. Discussing culture within an authenticity/myth binary, which the Kailyard term promotes, simply disguises the criteria we bring to bear on deciding what is authentic. To Wilson, Lockhart, and the writers of the early nineteenth century it was the peasant, rural Scotland of Burns which held the key to essential Scotland. To critics of the mid twentieth-century, however, it was industrial, working-class Scotland which became the touchstone of authenticity.

The concentration on social realism in the work of David Craig and John Spiers illustrates the extent to which anxiety over representation of the nation has produced a clear bias towards unqualified approval for realism and suspicion of romance and fantasy. David Craig stated that 'if Scott had been more aware of the society around him, he might have been less prone to the irresponsibility of romance-writing and plot-making.'[43] Story-telling and imagination are here viewed with suspicion, as a retreat from the political needs of the time. On a more acceptably literary level of argument, Andrew Noble judges 'the Kailyard novel' as the culmination of Scotland's 'sorry failure of nerve,' the failure which meant it was 'incapable of contributing to the great realist tradition of the nineteenth-century novel.'[44] This critical attitude descends from J.H. Millar and the contemporary Kailyard critics I discussed in my introduction, and it is an idea present in MacDiarmid also. In his 'Leaves from a London Scottish Diary' contributed to *The Scots Pictorial*, he is concerned with the false representation of real life in Scotland, attacking Scots in London of tacitly supporting a conspiracy to blunt the representation of industrial, urban Scotland:

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[43] Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*, 155-6
[44] Noble, 'Urbane Silence', 89, 64

> They forget the consequences of rural depopulation. The great majority of the Scottish people today have entirely changed in temperament and tendencies from the stock conceptions of the Kailyaird School. There is little relationship between Thrums and Clydebank.[45]

This line of argument was integral to the classic attack on Kailyard made by George Blake in his seminal book *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (1951):

> The bulk of the Scottish people were thus condemned to a purely urban, sophisticated, and mainly ugly sort of life during the nineteenth century. A really dramatic, often beastly, revolution was taking place. And what had the Scottish novelists to say about it? the answer is- nothing, or as nearly nothing as makes no matter.[46]

To Blake - the pioneer of the twentieth-century 'Industrial Novel' - this was 'a massive evasion' and a 'betrayal of the realities of Scottish life.'[47] But Blake's critical criterion is heavily biased. He maps out right from the beginning *his* idea of the novelist:

> We expect him, in his task of creating "the willing suspension of disbelief," to be something of a social historian as well. His work must be to some extent what is nowadays called "documentary" in character ... The novelists are the reporters and colourists of history.[48]

Under this criterion it is inevitable that the author of *Peter Pan* gets short shrift, and Blake's text has been the crucial player in setting Barrie up as the archetype for everything that is wrong with Scottish culture. It, more than most, has tied him up with the term 'Kailyard' and it may well be that the misrepresentation of Barrie within Scottish literature owes much to an accident of literary publishing. Blake's book is not really about Barrie but was included in a series called 'The English Novelists' (we'll ignore the troublesome adjective) which presumably required Blake to include the name of a novelist in his title. As the above quote shows,

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45 (19 May 1923), repr. *The Raucle Tongue*, 48
46 Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School*, 9
47 George Blake, *Annals of Scotland 1895-1955* (London, 1955), 9
48 Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School*, 7

Blake was concerned with the failure of the whole of the nineteenth century to produce a novel based on Scottish industrial life and Barrie, by default, became a metonymical icon for this failure.[49]

Barrie and the Kailyard School remains a hopelessly inappropriate context for the understanding of Barrie's prose fiction. R.D.S. Jack has drawn attention to how little *literary* criticism is contained within it,[50] and predictably Blake's discussion of Barrie stops at *The Little Minister*, despite his arguing that with *Sentimental Tommy* Barrie 'turned to more difficult problems.'[51] What is really dismaying, however, is the way the book continues to have a categorical impact on the understanding of Barrie's work. It is quite remarkable to see it, and not Leonee Ormond's much more recent introduction, included in the reading list for Barrie given in the most recent literary history of Scotland by Marshall Walker.[52] The restrictive critical parameters of Kailyard are still very much in place. Furthermore, Walker frames his discussion of Barrie's plays under the sub-heading 'The Failure of J.M. Barrie,' but 'the failure of J.M. Barrie' is the product not of the failed nature of an individual writer but the failure of the context into which we are trying to fit his work. It would seem the most basic of critical mistakes to argue that a writer who sets out to work within modes of romance or fantasy is unrealistic, yet it is a persistent charge levelled against Barrie as dissolved into the term Kailyard. Even where some critics have recognised that Kailyard is not realism, and that it does seem to be operating in a different literary context, the *judgement* has remained unequivocal. For instance, Gillian Shepherd leads away from realism when she notices that 'the rhythms are unmistakably those of the fairy or folk tale', but then immediately re-asserts it as an overriding critical criterion by arguing that the

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[49] Similar charges have been brought against both Scott and Stevenson. See Andrew Noble, 'Highland History and Narrative Form in Scott and Stevenson', in Noble (ed.) *Robert Louis Stevenson* (London and Totowa, 1983), 134-87

[50] Jack, *The Road to the Never Land*, 20

[51] Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School*, 70

[52] Walker, *Scottish Literature since 1707*, 399

Kailyarders 'contrived a distorted, perverted, negative reality which bore little resemblance to the Scotland of the late nineteenth century.'[53] The context of 'fairy or folk tale' is completely dispensed with as judgement is made on the unlikeliness of the situations (when is a fairy tale ever likely?) and the 'synthetic' rather than 'organic' culture represented.[54] The point here is that Barrie is not being evaluated on his own terms at all but on terms of what he is doing for Scotland.

As will by now be perfectly clear, many of the arguments implicit in the critical term Kailyard (and, by extension, those against Barrie) are not literary arguments at all but political ones. It is politically expedient to have Scotland represented in literature when it is not in a position to represent itself through independent government. When charting the literary history of Scotland, it has often been political arguments which have dictated the way the wider cultural picture is viewed. The emphasis on authenticity, on realism and on tradition have resulted in the virtual dismissal of the Victorian age in Scottish literature. The multiple meanings contained within the term Kailyard come out very clearly in the way it has become a synonym for the period. Victorian Scottish literature is deemed unrealistic because escapist; inauthentic because unrepresentative of the experiences of the vast majority of Scottish people. Furthermore, time and again the Victorian period has been projected as a breakdown in tradition, the product of 'a lack of national solidarity and of the sense of national continuity.'[55] In some senses this is an accurate enough view - I showed in chapter 1 how nostalgia and a feeling that the Scottish nation was a thing of the past is characteristic of much writing of the second half of the century. But the continued projection of this period as 'a loss of cohesion and self-confidence,'[56] as put by Paul Scott in the very first chapter of the nineteenth-century volume of the AUP *History*, is as much an

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[53] Shepherd, 'The Kailyard', 312
[54] Ibid. 316-7
[55] Power, *Literature and Oatmeal*, 98
[56] P.H. Scott, '"The Last Purely Scotch Age"', 13

imposition of a nationalist inspired 'if only' type criticism as it is a useful tool for understanding the real contribution of Victorian Scottish writers. To project Barrie, for instance, as part of Scotland's collective lack of self-confidence, is to draw attention away from those more central areas of his art which are not governed by his national identity. We need to overturn this preoccupation with viewing Victorian Scottish writers as part of a failed tradition which the Kailyard critical term encourages. I would argue that the gap in Victorian Scotland is not a creative one but a critical one, because for too long we have followed MacDiarmid's lead in assuming that all that went immediately before is, to use Maurice Lindsay's words, 'both tushery and mushery.'[57] Maybe it is that, but it surely requires a more sophisticated critical vocabulary and approach, one which is not suffocatingly concerned with articulation of national identity and sense of national tradition. Too little attention has been paid to the way we think in terms of national traditions. What constitutes a national tradition? Does interaction with other literatures negate or advance that tradition? On what criteria should we include or exclude works which may or may not belong to that tradition? The very fact that we are asking the last question proves that tradition is always a construct, not a naturally occurring phenomenon.

The question of what constitutes Scotland's real literary tradition in the Victorian period has been complicated recently by the work of William Donaldson, who has shown that by focusing narrowly on book-culture we may have been missing the very tradition we've assumed not to exist. By looking at fiction published in the popular press, Donaldson is able to detect an indigenous Scottish culture operating, in the most part, within the realist paradigms which Scottish writers are supposed to have avoided. Literary histories, though paying lip-service to Donaldson's work, have been slow to incorporate his challenge to the overall

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[57] Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature*, 348

picture - William Alexander is nowhere mentioned, for example, in Marshall Walker's survey of *Scottish Literature since 1707,* suggesting that the old confines of the canon remain firmly in place. The reason why this has been the case, I would suggest, is that the literature Donaldson is presenting is beyond the scope of the critical paradigms within which Scottish literary criticism is generally working - namely, representation. The fiction of William Alexander does not pose a threat to Scottish national identity precisely because it has not been marketed as such to an international audience. We concentrate on Kailyard fiction because it seems more politically crucial. As with the case of Barrie, what Donaldson's work shows is that what we may highlight as 'tradition' may be more reflective of a political agenda than representative of the literature on offer. What we project as historical continuity may only be a selective glance at the picture designed to support and confirm an already inclined eye.

The critical plight of the Victorian period has bred a larger theory for Scottish writing in general for which Kailyard has, yet again, become a synonym. This is the theory that Scottish writers are psychologically compelled to be inauthentic and evasive - to retreat from the real world. The idea is present in MacDiarmid's critique of Neil Munro, whom he charges with having indulged in a 'literature of escape':

> He has preferred the little wars of Lorn to the conflict of real life in which he ought to have engaged (22).

Such a criticism of Scottish culture has been widely deployed by modern-day critics, particularly those like Tom Nairn, Andrew Noble and Kenneth Simpson who argue that because of the cultural effects of the Union, Scotland failed to develop the central tenets of Romanticism. Simpson's *The Protean Scot* advances this argument in full:

> when the first stirrings of Romanticism began to be felt Scotland was no longer a nation, and as a people she was already preoccupied with an image of herself that was rooted in a distant

> and largely unreal past. Ironically, Romanticism did much to encourage just such sentimental nationalism. Only in Scotland did Romanticism help to guide people along the way to, not self-realisation and self-advancement, but a predominantly self-willed stereotyping.[58]

The important phrase in that sentence is 'self-willed.' It is argued that the Scots themselves conspire in promoting an image of themselves that is divorced from reality. Yet here again is another instance of criticism which ascribes agency to a country, as if all of Scotland's writers are working together within the same closed paradigm of cultural influence and ideological conditioning. The key point to make here is that in arguments like that of Simpson's, the treatment of *identity* by Scottish writers is being considered solely in terms of *national* identity. Likewise, criticism of Barrie which argues for his evasiveness is only concerned about the early Kailyard fiction - the only work which could be said to place Scotland at the centre of its subject matter. The later (and better) work, where the question of identity involves a consideration of trans-national issues, is not afforded close critical attention. Once you escape from the 'Kailyard' label far enough to look beyond the issue of national representation (as I have done in chapter 4) Barrie suddenly becomes a writer concerned with the very concept of identity and evasion. The misreading of Barrie is due to the way anxiety over the representation of the nation has prevented most Scottish writers from being considered on terms other than how they represent Scotland. National identity has been allowed to take precedence over other forms of identity-bearing categories such as class, race, religion, gender and sexual orientation. This is a point which I will return to later in this chapter.

SCOTCH MYTHS AND SCOTTISH REALITY

The transferral of the term Kailyard onto other disciplines has resulted in a similar concern with how an image of Scotland is represented internationally. In Tom

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[58] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, 9

Nairn's seminal analysis of Scottish culture and its relation to political nationalism, 'the "Kailyard" tradition', which he dates from 'the 1820s onwards,' is part of Scotland's 'neurosis.' Employing a Marxist critique of the developmental progress of capitalism, Scottish nationalism is projected by Nairn as an historical aberration. Scottish culture is seen as sick and deformed because 'the relationship between civil society and State in Scotland precluded a fully national culture.' All Scotland could produce was a culture which 'could only be "sub-nationalist", in the sense of venting its national content in various crooked ways - neurotically, so to speak, rather than directly.'[59] The two most prominent strands is this neurosis were Tartanry and Kailyard, and since Nairn it has become commonplace to link these two words together. David McCrone's sociological analysis of Scotland and Colin McArthur's work on Scottish film have both afforded a privileged place to this coupling.[60]

In political arguments, the term Kailyard thus stands for a false culture which Scotland allegedly neurotically produces for itself. If viewed intelligently, the argument runs, anyone can see just how unrepresentative and insincere this culture really is; it is nothing less than a wilful distortion of reality designed to escape from confronting the world. Nairn's first discussion of the topic came in 1977 when he predicted, as his title made clear, *The Break-Up of Britain*. He revised his book four years later after Scotland had failed to secure for itself a sufficiently positive vote in the 1979 devolution referendum. The critical response to the failure of 1979 was to take on board and elevate Nairn's analysis of Scotland's neurosis as a general truth. If Scotland had failed to seize the opportunity it had to take control over its own affairs, something must be wrong within Scotland's psychological make-up; something which makes it retreat from reality and accept itself as

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[59] Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 156-7
[60] McCrone, *Understanding Scotland*, op. cit.; McArthur (ed), *Scotch Reels* op. cit.

defeated, inferior or as a thing of the past. It must be psychologically inclined towards being Kailyard.

The failure of the 1979 referendum bred various analyses of Scottish culture which cried out for greater realism and authenticity. The most significant of these was *Scotch Myths*. Devised by Barbara and Murray Grigor, this exhibition was subtitled 'An Exploration of Scotchness,' and was an 'enquiry into the residue of fatigued romanticism and home-grown caricature.'[61] Although it drew attention to the international interest in Scottish images which resulted from the success of Ossian and Scott, the exhibition broke new ground by focusing in particular on the representation of Scotland in forms of popular culture and advertising. The national stereotypes were shown to have drawn on Burns, Scott and Ossian, but the emphasis on picture postcards and food product labels showed up for the first time the extent to which these images have been deployed in international mass markets and, very likely, soaked up by the world populace. The growth of picture postcards dates from the 1890s - exactly contemporary, of course, with Kailyard fiction - and indicates how developments in the media at the turn of the century played a crucial part in the emergence of this kind of anxiety over Scotland's exported image. The exhibition shows that the critical time for the development of the stereotyped image of Scotland was the early years of the twentieth century, the years when Harry Lauder - whose presence was a leitmotiv in the exhibition - was parading an image of Scotland on the transatlantic stage.

The conclusion which grew out of the debate arising from *Scotch Myths* can be summarised by a quote from Lindsay Paterson:

> The whole paraphernalia of tartan mythology is ... a serious obstacle to meaningful and radical self-government, to the building of a society in Scotland controlled by the people who live here.

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[61] All quotes are taken form an exhibition programme on deposit in St Andrews University Library. There are no publication details for the programme, its shelfmark is StAN1470.C8

> Distorting, frothily romantic, escapist and trivilialising, the Myths have concealed from us our history and our social reality ... The enemy to national development is, in short, not the English, not the Americans, not the EEC, not even, simply Westminster (though that doesn't help); it is, far more acutely, our own perverted collective self-image.[62]

This is Simpson's 'self-willed stereotyping' and the conclusion which grew out of the *Scotch Myths* debate was that Scotland's problem was its own invention of a false Kailyard culture, which now needed to be replaced by a real culture more representative of the lives of the people. It is an argument which uses the term Kailyard in the same way as MacDiarmid, applying it now to the whole spectrum of Scottish politics and culture. Paterson concluded his review by saying that the way to ensure 'national development' was to find

> [a] national ideology - a view of Scotland that engages with reality ... a vision of what Scottish people are ... a national movement that has its roots not in the cheap distortions of the tartan Myths (part of which is the xenophobia of the Kailyard), but rather in a positive aspiration to a 'self-confident, realistic, national awareness.[63]

This is no different from the strategy put forward by MacDiarmid in *Contemporary Scottish Studies*, where he argued that 'Scotland has not yet been realised as Scotland' (71), and the reaction against Kailyard contained in the *Scotch Myths* debate was prompted by the same fears held by Muir and MacDiarmid - that there may be no identifiable, separate Scottish national distinctiveness. This very anxiety was present, though seemingly only implicitly, in Paterson's review. He argued that the myths had come about 'precisely because there has been nothing else identifiably Scottish other than couthy tartanry to act as symbols ... of national consciousness.'[64] Scotland invented a false culture to gloss over the fact that it had no culture. To Paterson, not only were the myths revolting because distorting, but

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[62] Lindsay Paterson, 'Scotch Myths - 2', *The Bulletin of Scottish Politics*, II (1981), 67-71, p. 68
[63] Ibid. 71
[64] Ibid. 70

they showed up how Scotland was in danger of losing whatever national consciousness it could still be said to have left.

This revulsion from myth fails to recognise, however, that identity is always a myth, based not on something natural but on an act of identification by individuals onto an imagined plane of communality. As Cairns Craig has argued, by attempting to *find* a national ideology that was supposedly based on reality (and therefore authentic, unlike the Kailyard myths) all you were doing was creating another myth. In the above quote Paterson seems unaware that all he is calling for is a new myth to replace the old and only hoping that the new will carry a greater authority because based on an alleged authenticity. His call to re-define Scotland by inventing a culture is no different from the invention of culture undertaken by Wilson, Lockhart and the various other writers I discussed in chapter 1 - the writers who did so much to establish the Kailyard images of Scotland. It is thus supremely ironic that the argument being put forward by Paterson and others as to how to get rid of the Kailyard images proceeds from the same strategic base which produced them in the first place: that a national identity in perceived threat of oblivion is worth re-inventing in order to allow individuals to identify around its constructed criteria of distinctiveness. It would be hard not to agree that societies will always need to construct myths for themselves to live by; the error comes about with making absolute claims to authenticity. This was one of the main problems with the arguments being put forward in Scottish film studies in the 1980s.

Within film studies, the term Kailyard has been used as a way into a definition of Scottish culture. The *Scotch Reels* event and book were principally an attempt to map out ground for the discussion of Scottish film and used the terms 'Tartanry and Kailyard' as the defining contexts within which to initiate debate. National representation was thus immediately prioritised as the axis of critical

estimation and films were included in *Scotch Reels*' critical field on account of the way they dealt with Scotland. As a result, Bill Douglas was omitted from discussion on the basis that his films 'didn't fit in with the thesis we were trying to put forward.'[65] Such acts of critical canonicity are exactly similar to those which enable Barrie's later fiction to be omitted from histories of Scottish literature. Throughout *Scotch Reels* it is explicitly demanded that film and television should engage with the issue of national identity in order to correct misconceptions over Scottish identity. It is accepted that international understanding of Scotland exists purely in an escapist paradigm fuelled by the legacy of Kailyard and it is thus seen as the responsibility of Scottish artists and intellectuals to replace these 'regressive' images with something different, something more 'politically progressive.' The responsibility is again seen within political terms; in the words of John Caughie, an understanding or constructing of Scottish identity which escapes from the images of Kailyard is what is required 'as the basis for political action.'[66] Culture and aesthetics are here being projected as the weapons in a political struggle.

The *Scotch Reels* critics did not hold back in making practical suggestions as to what might constitute a more authentic Scottish identity. McArthur launched a sustained attack on Kailyard in various pieces of work. Although he failed to define the term in any way, what he was targeting was the way Scotland had been represented in film in terms of a static identity. He argued that Kailyard operates so as to convince the populace there are 'no alternative discourses within which to construct our native land and our own identity.'[67] The most successful exposition of his theory comes in a short article on *The Maggie*. Arguing that Kailyard is an

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[65] The point was made in a letter by John Brown to *Cencratus*, (12, 1983, p. 37) quoting Colin McArthur's words at the discussion event at the Edinburgh Film Festival which accompanied the publication of *Scotch Reels*.

[66] John Caughie, 'Scottish Television: What would it Look Like?', in *Scotch Reels*, 112-122, p. 116

[67] Colin McArthur, 'Breaking the Signs: "Scotch Myths" as Cultural Struggle', *Cencrastus*, 7 (1981), 21-25, p. 21

ideology in the sense that it makes what has been historically constructed appear natural and timeless, McArthur shows how reviews of the film, even within Scotland, commended the representation of Scots as accurate and sympathetic.[68] As he makes clear elsewhere, McArthur is arguing that myth breeds myth and that the Scots have come to believe that Kailyard representations really do define Scottish national identity:

> Since there were simply no alternative traditions with comparable power, the tendency was for any film dealing with Scotland, or having a Scot as a character, to be pulled strongly towards the armature of images, characters and stories making up Tartanry and Kailyard.[69]

For McArthur, Kailyard is politically regressive because it celebrates an image of Scotland rather than confronting the political structures which underpin Scottish reality. His conclusion is the same as those taken from the *Scotch Myths* analysis, to demand the mobilisation of new discourses 'more adequate to the task of dealing with Scottish reality.'[70]

In another chapter in *Scotch Reels*, John Caughie's suggests how such an act of mobilisation might provide Scottish individuals with something to identify. Arguing for the need to construct a 'Scottishness' in the way class identities have been constructed, Caughie writes:

> it would be the role of a national culture to provide points of identification around which individuals or groups could discover or recognise their 'Scottishness,' a Scottishness which could then be held together as a special and unique identity in the face of the pressures towards nationless and classless homogeneity.[71]

This argument, however, is contradictory: stressing the need to conform to some kind of homogenous national idea in order avoid conformity and homogeneity on a

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[68] Colin McArthur, 'The Maggie', *Cencrastus*, 12 (1983), 10-14
[69] Colin McArthur, 'Scotland and Cinema: The Iniquity of the Fathers', in *Scotch Reels*, 40-69, p.45
[70] introduction to ibid., 3
[71] Caughie, 'Scottish Television', 116

different level. Either way, individuals are conforming. Caughie does, however, allow for a fluid idea of national identity, concluding that a national culture would be one which confronted and opened out the specific contradictions of the historical development of the nation, using contradiction to continually transform a national identity which was never given and will never be completed.' Unfortunately, only four pages later Caughie slides from this position of openness straight into an essentialist fallacy when he states that the 'working class experience' has, since the twenties, 'seemed to offer the only real consistent basis for a Scottish national culture.'[72] No doubt influenced by the findings and arguments of George Blake and David Craig, Caughie, McArthur and most other film critics have systematically promoted the working class experience as the best available option within which to energise a new national consciousness. So to McArthur, any representation of Scotland on film which incorporates 'the visual style of easel painting' constructed in the European imagination since Ossian, is regressive, whilst the impulse behind *Floodtide* (the film based on George Blake's novel of the same name) to 'define the meaning of Scotland in relation to the Clyde' is progressive.[73] The individual subject, in order to feel part of the 'special and unique identity,' is required to conform to the working-class experience.

It is the problem of representing a *whole* culture which prevents the act of simply replacing images in this way from being an adequate response to the demand for accurate representation of Scottish reality. There is more than one 'reality'. The working-class culture which McArthur, Caughie and others have promoted as the basis for the renewed 'progressive' national culture called for by Paterson, is no less of a myth than Kailyard because it is unable to serve the whole of Scottish national consciousness. The organisers of *Scotch Myths* saw a 'unified culture' as utopia, and the response to the exhibition, together with the

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[72] Ibid., 121
[73] McArthur, 'Scotland and Cinema', 52

development of film criticism contained in *Scotch Reels*, represents the perpetuation of the Muir/MacDiarmid idea that it is possible and desirable to speak in terms of a 'unified,' 'whole' culture which is authentically Scottish. When this agenda is used to discuss individual works of art all it succeeds in doing is to impose pressure on each individual writer to 'define the meaning of Scotland' in each and every text.

From MacDiarmid to *Scotch Reels*, the term Kailyard has been used in cultural criticism to refer to an alleged inauthenticity; a fake Scotland. As such it has encouraged the discussion of Scottish literature and culture along a real/fake, authentic/inauthentic axis which has proved unhelpful in providing an adequate account of the entire oeuvre of individual authors or the variety of cultural output coming out of Scotland. It is important to stress that it is the critical context, not the creative writing which is at fault. The problem with discussing individual works within the Kailyard/anti-Kailyard; authentic/inauthentic binary is that there is always an agenda behind whatever set of characteristics might be conceived as constituting authentic Scottishness. The structuring of national identity is always dependent upon other forms of identity such as religion, class or gender. The critics in *Scotch Reels* advocated a national identity which was structured along lines of class. McArthur's discussion of *Floodtide* rejected the way the film articulated a celebration of the shipbuilding community and regretted its subordination of 'the class discourse and the sectarian discourse.'[74] By placing emphasis on these points McArthur is following a Marxist agenda, which is not to suggest the invalidation of such agenda, but to criticise the way McArthur applies it *uncritically* to the idea of national identity - as if this should automatically be the most important issues around which to understand national identity. The failure of Scottish culture becomes for McArthur, as it did for David Craig and Tom Nairn,

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[74] Ibid. 53

the failure of a Marxist critique of industrial conditions. Unless criticisms such as these carry with them an awareness that they are steeped in particular philosophies, all they risk doing is perpetuating the myth that there is an essential Scotland which appeals to individuals over and above any other identity-creating concepts. The influence of MacDiarmid is crucial here. In making us think about national identity in absolutist terms he allowed subsequent critics to naturalise whatever criteria they set up as authentically Scottish. What I am arguing for is the need to be alert to the presence of trans-national issues of identity which always structure and underpin whatever idea of nationality we may like to construct. To discuss literature within abstract ideas of unified national traditions is to mystify the way other components of identity are structured within that idea.

It is certainly true that criticism has begun to move in the direction of a more pluralist angle on national identity. The working-class experience has moved from being given outright cultural approval to being rejected as just another totalising myth, a 'Clydesideism' to be placed alongside Tartanry and Kailyardism. Within media studies a more inclusive approach to film and television has been undertaken by the volume *From Limelight to Satellite* (1990), and a recent volume of essays on the modern Scottish novel reflects a wariness of making the working-class experience the essential Scottish experience and realist modes of writing the quintessential Scottish theme.[75] More significantly, the work of Cairns Craig and David McCrone (in his book *Understanding Scotland*) has questioned the validity of the very act of searching for Scottish identity and argued that attention should be focused on the way being Scottish intersects with other components of identity. The thrust of this critical approach can be neatly summarised by Robert Crawford's comment that 'there are more Scotlands than people who live in Scotland.'[76]

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[75] *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, ed. Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh, 1993). See in particular the essays by John Burns and Douglas Dunn.

[76] Crawford, 'Bakhtin and Scotlands', op. cit., 57

Crawford's recent work has advocated a need to 'de-define' Scotland[77] and a recent article by Berthold Schoene has argued that Scottish literature is leaving the restrictions of the MacDiarmid era behind:

> Whereas the search for an all-embracing national identity used to be the predominant creative impulse, the emphasis is now on the differences between various individual and group identities. The main issue is not any more the status of the Scottish nation as a minority within the United Kingdom but rather the status of minority communities within Scottish society; not essential Scottishness but rather the differences and similarities between different kinds and ways of Scottishness.[78]

The awareness of the need to promote a pluralistic idea of the nation is also evident in the journal to which Schoene's article belongs: *Scotlands*.

In this thesis I have charted key moments where cultural critics have demanded a national renaissance and a re-definition of Scotland - Wilson and Lockhart, MacDiarmid, *Scotch Myths*. Each of these moments has followed on from a feeling that Scottish identity is either being misrepresented or in danger of being dissolved altogether. When discussing identity, cultural theorists are in consensus that 'identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty.'[79] If this is true, then a sign of a healthy culture will be an acceptance of change and re-definition as an inevitable and desirable progress and not an indication of the possible dissolution of identity. Subsequently, as a national culture gets stronger, national identity will come to be seen less and less as an overriding issue in both creative literature and literary criticism. This was, in fact, one of the concerns of David Craig, who wrote that 'in the end one wishes Scotsmen would have done with treating themselves as a special 'problem' and take

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[77] Robert Crawford, 'Dedefining Scotland', in Susan Bassnett (ed.), *Studying British Culture* (London, 1997), 83-96

[78] Schoene, 'A Passage to Scotland', 115

[79] Keith Mercer, 'Welcome to the jungle: identity and diversity in post-modern politics', in John Rutherford (ed), *Identity: Community, Culture and Difference* (London, 1990), 43

their character, national and personal, for granted.' By clearing ourselves of 'overconsciousness', Craig went on, we can 'get through in our literature to the real nature of the lives we live in our part of the world.'[80] Few teachers and critics of Scottish literature would disagree with this prescription but it should be important to apply it to *literary criticism* as well. The structural base Craig uses to analyse Scottish literature prevents him from recognising where some Scottish writers are doing exactly as he hoped - ignoring national character and discussing the 'real nature of the[ir] lives'. Barrie's later work cannot be accommodated into the paradigm of social criticism set up as the 'real nature of the lives we live' because Craig's canon does not allow him to read Barrie's better work. It is only the early texts that are considered because they are the only ones which offer a picture of Scottish reality on a societal level. So long as we think in terms of Kailyard and anti-Kailyard we will go on prioritising representation and shutting our eyes to the areas where Scottish writers really make a contribution. Scottish literary criticism should be leaving the restrictive boundaries of the Kailyard term behind.

Through the work of cultural theorists like Homi Bhabha, the idea of identity as a hybrid phenomenon has been foregrounded in criticism to such an extent that it is fair to say we are experiencing a paradigm shift: identity is becoming seen as constructed around a multiple range of characteristics - race, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality, class etc. - which makes the idea of there being a distinctive Scottish or any other national identity no less or more helpful than, for example, the idea that there is a distinctly gendered identity. There remains, indeed, a danger that by simply switching focus we will only perpetuate the assessment of writers according to the metonymical function I have been outlining in this chapter. For instance, discussion of MacDiarmid's poetry in relation to gender issues has recently got under way with Aileen Christianson

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[80] Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People*, 164-5

exposing *A Drunk Man*'s 'unshakeable assumption that to be Scottish is to be male'.[81] It seems important for such qualifications to be made but Christianson's conclusion, that such a male tradition is 'well worth rejecting' seems misguided. Assigning the text to oblivion would merely perpetuate the prevalence of national criteria in critical discussion as well as maintaining abstract notions of 'tradition.' It would simply continue to suggest that a text must promote an adequate (politically progressive) view of national identity over and above anything else - that discussion of Scottish writers must proceed from the basis of how they construct a vision for Scotland. It is certainly true that MacDiarmid's idea of nationality contained in *A Drunk Man* appears exclusively male and heterosexual, but an important essay by Christopher Whyte has argued that *A Drunk Man*'s 'representation of gender politics is not idealised and transhistorical but pained, urgent, and demanding of change.'[82] If we rid ourselves of the preoccupation of writers standing for Scotland then we can still recognise MacDiarmid's gender biases but, ultimately, treat them critically and not be threatened by them. By approaching the work relatively objectively Whyte can notice the same gender imbalances as Christianson, but can leave MacDiarmid's voice and poetry still standing, as, indeed, we should if we assess his work on grounds other than nationalism and gender. It may be that we need to go through a stage of attacking MacDiarmid's biases on various levels of identity, and feminist voices like that of Christianson are crucial in offering a critique of MacDiarmid's poetry from important and pressing standpoints, but we must not reject MacDiarmid altogether just because he marginalises and oppresses within the context of gender; to do so would be to merely repeat the process whereby Barrie is rejected because he marginalises and (allegedly) oppresses within the context of nationalism.

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[81] Aileen Christianson, 'Flyting with "A Drunk Man"', *Scottish Affairs*, 5 (Autumn 1993), 126-35, p. 126. See also Catherine Kerrigan, 'Desperately seeking Sophia', *Scotlands* 2 (1994), 155-63

[82] Christopher Whyte, 'Gender and Sexuality in The Drunk Man', *Scottish Affairs*, 5 (Autumn 1993), 136-46, p. 137

Christianson's attack on MacDiarmid's gender bias would probably not have been so strong and so necessary if there had not developed the metonymical status into which the Scottish writer is cast. It is because MacDiarmid is seen as an intellectual hero (in the way Burns is a popular hero) that Christianson is forced to be so categorical in her criticism. She is led to call for the rejection of MacDiarmid because he has come to stand for a positive idea of Scottish literature and Scotland in general. The same situation has arisen with regard to the generation of writers who have taken urban, industrial Scotland as the background for their work.

In 1983, Cairns Craig had voiced concern that a new Kailyard myth may come to replace the old:

> What is worrying in the contemporary situation is the way that the death-throes of industrial West-Central Scotland have become the touchstone of authenticity for our culture ... That decaying industrial world - Peter McDougall's plays inhabit them, as does William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* and the Jimmy Boyle myth - remakes the emblems of tartanry and kailyard in a new form.[83]

For Craig this was an indication that 'the cultural dilemma that produced Tartanry and Kailyard continues unabated.' That dilemma is that it is assumed that Scotland needs to find a totalising, unified national culture which it can parade as distinctively and authentically Scottish. To Craig this is an evasion of the real, ongoing, dynamic identity of Scottish culture. His fears have proved justified. New lines have been drawn as to what constitutes authentic and inauthentic, real and escapist, leading critics to complain once more about the way Scotland is being internationally marketed. Whereas to critics in the 1890s it was a Scotland which was rural and full of teardrops, ministers and dominies, to the critics of the 1990s the fear is that Scotland is becoming seen as urban, working-class and full of swearing, drinking and drug-taking. William McIlvanney's admiration for the Big

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[83] Cairns Craig, 'Visitors from the Stars: Scottish Film Culture', *Cencrastus*, 11 (1983), 6-11, p. 9

Man figure, around which so much of his fiction is based, has led to an anxiety that Scottish culture is becoming represented entirely within such partial masculine images. In the same way, the success of James Kelman has bred fears that Scotland is becoming encased wholly within terms of a working-class, Glasgow reality. Yet how far are these critical anxieties merely a repeat of the anxieties surrounding Kailyard fiction in the 1890s? How far are we in danger of repeating the same *critical* mistakes which cast Barrie as a villain for not dealing with industrial Scotland and turned attention away from those areas of his work which do not deal exclusively with national identity. Isn't James Kelman's art more a commitment to working-class politics than a view of the nation? In speeches and interviews he seems hardly to mention the Scottish nation and speaks instead inside a class manifesto rejecting the cultural dominance of academia. Similarly, how far is Irvine Welsh *responsible* for propagating a view of Scotland as a nation of drug-users, wife-beaters and robbers? The accusations that have been levelled at these writers suggest more about the critical contexts they are expected to fit into rather than the writers and individual works themselves. Of course Kelman and Welsh carry the weight of Scottish identity simply because they are Scottish and are producing works that, for the most part, are set in Scotland. Furthermore, through various forms of media, Welsh in particular has had his fiction disseminated to a large international audience. In this sense they are cast into much the same critical context as was the fiction of Barrie, Crockett and Maclaren. The uneasiness which surrounds their success comes out of the way their work has been promoted as definitively Scottish. Whereas in the 1890s Robertson Nicoll was responsible for generating outrage amongst the Scottish literati, the extravagant marketing of Welsh by magazines like *Radical Scotland* appear poised to ignite similar debates. The critical Kailyard, and the dangers of misrepresentation it involves, could still be with us.

In this thesis I have shown how Kailyard should be seen not as a body of literature but as a critical concept; not as a way in which creative writers look at Scotland but as a way in which literary critics look at Scottish literature. The thesis has been about literary criticism; the directions in which it takes readers and the restrictions it imposes upon them. I have shown how as a critical concept Kailyard is an inadequate base from which to discuss the fiction of J.M. Barrie and Scottish literature in the 1890s. Furthermore, I have shown how the term has been used as the base around which Scottish writing has been discussed in the twentieth century. Like any other academic discipline, Scottish literature is built upon defining criteria that is always in danger of becoming naturalised. Kailyard exposes some of that defining criteria more fully than any other critical term used in the field. First introduced as a term to draw attention to the dangers of insularity, Kailyard, as a critical concept, has become insular itself. Overcoming the narrow and exclusive terrain it promotes should be part of the ongoing dynamic base of Scottish literary criticism.

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Athenaeum	1888-1900
Academy	1888-1900
Bookman	1891-1902
Blackwood's Magazine	1888-1900
British Weekly	1886-1900
Critic	1888-1895
Edinburgh Evening Dispatch	1886-1890
Forum and Century	1888-1890
Glasgow Evening Times	1888-1898
Glasgow Herald	1888-1898
Harper's Monthly Magazine	1888-1895
Home Chimes	1884-1887
Literature	1897-1901
London Quarterly Review	1888-1890
National Observer	1888-1890
Nottingham Journal	1883-1884
Punch	1888-1898
Saturday Review	1888-1900
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